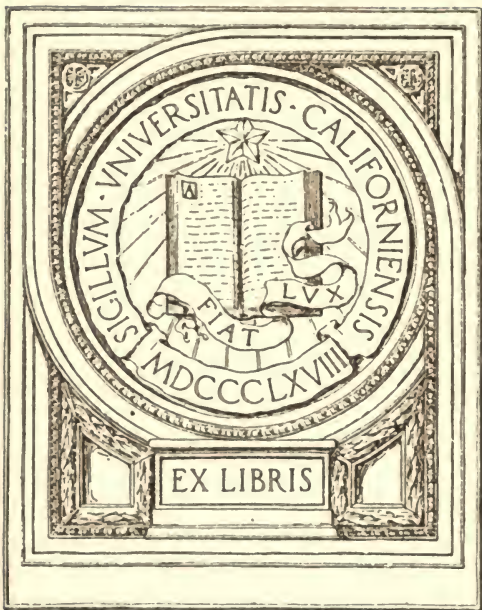


THE COMMON WAY.

BY

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"OLD CHESTER TALES" ETC.



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TO THE
AMERICAN

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THE COMMON WAY

ON THE SHELF

THERE are very few men and women who, between the ages of sixty and seventy years, escape a certain humiliating experience, which is known as being "laid on the shelf." If their children's affectionate hands lift them to this dusty eminence, the experience may come a little before sixty. If they climb up to it themselves (with some slight assistance from nephews and nieces), the unpleasant moment is generally postponed, because, not recognizing that in virtue of years the shelf is where they really belong, they refuse to take their place upon it. However, sooner or later, all of us

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(unless we are of the elect) find ourselves upon the shelf—a narrow, uncomfortable platform, generally dark and dingy, with the single advantage of height, which enables us to look down upon the next generation with bitterness or pity, or both.

One very curious thing about people who are thus packed away—just as unappreciated wedding-presents are packed away because there is a certain sentiment about them; or inartistic portraits of plain ancestors, that human decency will not destroy; or shabby Bibles, which superstition preserves behind rows of smart, new books—the human creatures who are shelved, because sentiment or decency or superstition will not permit their destruction, these useless persons do not always know that they are on the shelf. They still presume—*we* still presume (let us suppose that we have reached at least the beginning of the shelf age!)

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to dictate, and arrange, and lay down the law, in both morals and manners, for the younger folk. Indeed, the first symptom of the shelf period is a dogmatism as to what is right; the second is a deep melancholy in regard to things as they are; society, the church, the world are going rapidly to the dogs. It was not so when we were young!

There is, of course, a certain pleasure in this second symptom of the shelf, because it gives the shelved an opportunity to thank God that they are not as other men are. But, on the whole, the pain is greater than the pleasure. When we express our appreciation of the past, and some silly young person giggles, we feel a helpless irritation which is very uncomfortable. Indeed, it is this indifference of the young person to our opinions and ideals which first opens our eyes to the shelf; and once we know where we are, the pain begins.

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It is only our pain, however; these young folk whom we reproach and scold are not unhappy. If it amuses us to criticise them, to say, "It was not so when we were your age," to prophesy dark things for the girls because they ride horseback astride, or for the boys because of their outrageous slang; if we enjoy mourning over them, our kindly young folk do not begrudge us what little fun we can get out of our forebodings. No, the pain is not for them; it is for us. For us, turning and stretching about on our shelves, peering down from our dusty heights, ignored, smiled at (do not let us say laughed at—though such a thing has been known), tutored even—instructed, if you please!—in methods or manners or morals by these—*infants!* these babes that we have brought up and cherished, and—and spanked! (And some of us would like to repeat part of the programme

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now, if the opportunity were afforded us.)

This is the time of the real growing-pains of life; but they come, not to those who grow, but to those who are outgrown. Probably they are at their worst when we have just reached the shelf, but do not know it. It is a period of helpless struggle; we are bewildered and very much hurt because some fine day the young fry smile good-naturedly at each other over one of our wise remarks, and then go their own gait. It is their way of saying, "You are on the shelf, dears; now don't bother us!" The blank and angry astonishment of the shelved at this frank information breaks out in vehement denial of the fact. Like the borrower of the kettle who declared that it was cracked when he got it, whole when he sent it back, and that he never borrowed the old kettle, so the shelved cry out that the shelf is the wisest place in the world,

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that they are not on it, and that there is no shelf, anyway!

Of course, such denial is perfectly useless; yet it seems to be one of the ways in which we human creatures meet this dreadful moment of realization that we have been shelved. There are only three ways to meet it, and we must choose one or the other of them.

The first is this of denial of the shelf—a course often taken by fathers and mothers even while they are reaching out and pulling up some reluctant child to sit beside them in the dust and gloom. This way makes daily life just about as miserable as it can be—apart from absolute sin, which is, of course, entirely another matter.

The second way is to sit down quietly and contemplate the shelf; weighing its pain as against its comforts—for it has comforts. It escapes modern responsibilities because it does not believe in them;

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it gives self-satisfaction, which is always pleasant, though incompatible with progress; and it is agreeably tolerant because it is indifferent. If such comfort seems good to us, let us frankly choose the shelf, climbing up to it with dignity and sweetness, keeping it dusted and letting the sunshine rest on it, but never, never inviting any one to sit beside us!

This candid and good-natured acceptance of the situation which permits the younger generation to have its own views, is at least harmless, and it robs the shelf of much of its misery. But, of course, it is the end of usefulness and of the pain and joy of human sympathies.

There is still the third way of meeting the shelf; it begins with honest acknowledgment that the shelf is where we really belong. The reason that we belong there is that our ideals are not in harmony with the methods and manners and morals of the day. Life as it is is too complicated

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and too puzzling for our simpler views and theories; the formulæ with which we solved our problems even twenty-five years ago do not work now. Take, as a single example of the change in *methods*, domestic service as it presents itself to the housekeeper of to-day: the patriarchal relation between employer and employed which our mothers and grandmothers knew is gone; we may not like to admit it, but facts declare it. Furthermore, it is useless to try to revive this old relationship, to insist upon our personal responsibility for, let us say, the morals or even the health of the women in our kitchens. If we do so insist, we are wounded by a new ideal which practically and sometimes actually bids us mind our own business. The "girl," as we call her, though she may be fifty, feels quite competent to look after her own morals. Our advice as to health, say when she has a bad cold on her day out, or persistent

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indigestion from tea-drinking, is too apt to be understood as prying interference in her pleasures or a housekeeper's meanness about food. The name of the Ideal which expresses itself in this unpleasant way is personal freedom, and the change which it has brought about in domestic methods is probably obvious to every employer of labor who has reached the age of fifty.

The change in *manners* comes home to every father and mother whose boys are in college and whose girls are out of short skirts. Don't we know it, we mothers or aunts, nodding at each other from our shelves, sighing and shaking our heads, gossiping over our teacups about A.'s girl's bold looks, or B.'s girl's hoydenish ways, or C.'s girl's scandalous behavior with young men? As for the young men, from the beginning the adjustment of the relation between the father and his grown son has been difficult

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and sometimes painful; but when it is complicated by the boy's bad manners it is infinitely more difficult. The boy is a conceited jackass, so his father says, his own manners for the moment in abeyance. Why, bless my heart! the cub actually declines to vote the ticket that his father approves; and he has ideas of his own as to the office or the shop, and he expresses them with a clumsy obstinacy that makes the older man say hard things that he regrets half an hour afterwards.

"If I had spoken to my father as you speak to me," he says, with futile energy, "something would have happened, sir!" And the boy replies with great good-nature, "Granddad must have been an awful pill!"—which does not tend to restore the equilibrium of reverence and love between these two. Manners play no part in the lad's ideal, which, crudely expressed, is simply honesty; the speaking exactly what he thinks.

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There is still another change which forces upon us the recognition of the shelf: the indifference of the younger generation to our ideals in what might be called the minor *morals*.

The youngsters begin by frankly announcing that they do not believe what we believe; then they hew out for themselves strange theological and ethical heresies. The boys of C. T. U. mothers order cases of beer sent to their rooms. The girls take Sunday mornings for their mending, and play golf with their brothers in the afternoon; to the remonstrance of the shelf they reply, calmly, "What is the harm?" They can see the harm of a lie or a meanness; but fresh air, exercise, etc., etc.—? Rot! says the boy (or, horrible to relate, even the girl).

Perhaps we might sum up these changes by saying that in methods the new ideal is *personal freedom*, in manners it is *per-*

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sonal honesty, and in the lesser morals it is *personal conviction*.

Very few men and women who have passed middle age can candidly rehearse such changes and not recognize that they have been left behind by the procession; and following the recognition comes the cruel moment of climbing up to the shelf! Yet before we settle down upon it, turning our backs upon all growth, might it not be well to try to get the point of view of these hurrying, careless younger folk? It is not always easy to do this, but it is possible, because, having been young, we can understand them; whereas, as they have not been old, it is impossible for them to understand us. Hence the effort must be all on our side. . . .

Nothing will help us more in this effort than the memory of certain days thirty-five or forty years ago. . . . Looking back upon those days, we shall discover that the children's indifference to our opinions

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is but the echo of our indifference to the opinions of the preceding generation. We, to be sure, generally held our tongues, whereas our young people express their indifference with brutal distinctness. And when we wince under it, or get angry and red in the face, or tearful and reproachful, as our temperaments may determine, we know just how they felt, those fathers and mothers whose theories we thought so hopelessly behind the times! How our emancipated youth must have tried them; how our (now) old-fashioned views must have pained them! Perhaps we never quite appreciate the dear dead people who upon their shelves loved us in our raw youth, as we do when we wince under the careless sincerities of our children. With appreciation comes, of course, regret for duties left undone and privileges overlooked. Any life which has evolved a high ideal must know this sting of remorse; many

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an elderly man or woman groans over the stabs he or she gave in youth. There is no use in enlarging on such pain; none of the elderly folk sitting restless and unhappy on their shelves but know it too well; regret—regret! Yet miserable as it is, regret will be of enormous value if it makes us realize that the generation which wounds us to-day is just as kind and just as honest as was our generation, when with good-natured complacency we lifted our old fogies on to their shelves.

If we once get this thought clearly in our minds, we shall at least be able to believe in the good intentions of our young people, in spite of their extraordinary methods, manners, and minor morals.

This third way of accepting the shelf, with the spur of imagination rowelling our sore hearts, is far from comfortable, but it is our salvation.

To begin with, it will not let us pull the young person up to us for company;

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neither will it allow us to be indifferent to what we must deplore. We cannot help being anxious, perhaps even being unhappy, over what we see going on about us. New *methods* will not seem easy, new *manners* will not seem admirable, new *moralties* will not seem right. Nevertheless, we shall be hopeful. . . .

Take this matter of the change in domestic methods: if we look hard enough we shall see a certain value in the self-respect which is springing out of the new conditions of restlessness and discontent. It is not comfortable for employers to have employés demanding greater freedom; but the open mind will admit that it may be comfortable for the employés. It will even admit that such demands may result in better social conditions, and, after a while, in better citizenship, for the ideal of freedom hidden in the discomfort and transition is very noble.

In the manners of our young people

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the ideal is not always so obvious; yet, again, if we take the trouble to look, we generally find ground for hopefulness.

We will never admit that A.'s girl's behavior is beautiful; but we shall discern in it a certain rebound from the enforced and almost inevitably insincere demureness of our girlhood. B.'s daughter, bare-headed, bare-armed, swaggering across the golf - links, brown, muscular, vigorous, is not a pretty or dainty vision; the bloom and softness of girlhood, as we used to think of it, are gone; to speak frankly, she is not nearly so pretty as we were at her age. And her language! her slang! When B.'s girl (and B.'s are nice people, as everybody knows) cries out, on making a bad stroke, "Holy smoke! what a bum swat!" we, up on our shelves, shudder and feel that the world, as we knew it, is certainly coming to an end. No, B.'s daughter is not our ideal.

But the spurred imagination must sug-

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gest to us that though slang is not lovely, neither is it sinful, and that years will probably bring grammar as well as a sense of fitness. And, most of all, imagination will suggest that B.'s girl is not going to be the nervous invalid that her tiresome, complaining mother is; it may even picture to us her hearty, healthy children—though that is looking pretty far ahead, for B.'s girl is an unromantic little soul, the more's the pity!

As for C.'s daughters—"out, if you please, until one o'clock at night in a canoe with the D. boys. What is their mother thinking of?—except, of course, poor woman, she probably can't manage them; girls do anything they please nowadays! Imagine *our* mothers allowing such performances!" Well, well! our mothers come in for a little praise, it seems, by contrast. But when we were as old as C.'s girls we did not praise their old-fashioned ways. Only, unlike C.'s

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girls, and B.'s and A.'s, we were silent—except to one another. These new girls speak out! And who shall say that their candor is not better than our timidity? Oh yes, scandalous, of course, that canoe business, yet see the other side. Look at the simple, wholesome, candid relations between our boys and girls; no squashy sentimentality, no silly flirtatious romancing, almost no sex consciousness. This lack of the romantic instinct is not beautiful; it is, perhaps, not entirely normal—the pendulum has swung too far the other way; but can one look at the young man and the young woman of to-day, straightforward, clean - thoughted young people, and not be filled with a certain admiration and hopefulness?

As for the boy and his father, when one gets one's breath after hearing a grandfather called a "pill," it is generally to cry out indignantly at the lack of reverence. When a lad, discussing this

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or that with his father, remarks, earnestly, "You don't know what you're talking about, governor!" it does seem as though the bottom had dropped out of everything. "He speaks as though to an equal," the pained and angry listener declares. So he does; and it is a shock. Yet let the father and mother beware how they lightly refuse such equality. Below, in the boy's honest mind, is no shadow of disrespect; only an uncouth friendliness, which may easily be shocked into resentment if ordered to shape itself into the conventional and certainly more æsthetically pleasing manner with which we used to address our fathers. We wish, however, to be treated as superiors and not as equals. And why? In all honesty, are most fathers and mothers superior to these frank and wholesome young people in anything except their obvious years and the burden of sad or mean experiences? If age is our only claim to superiority, if

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we can demand reverence merely on the ground of having lived longer, we had best lie low, like Brer Rabbit, and hope the boys will not find us out. Age, *per se*, may claim tenderness and pity, but not respect; that only comes when the years have brought humanity and wisdom and the experience that worketh hope. With reverence it is not ask and receive but be worthy and receive!

And even if we are worthy, it will still be necessary to remember that reverence is not a matter of terms, but an attitude of the heart. Its presence may be concealed by slang, just as its absence was sometimes concealed by the stilted and respectful phraseology of previous generations.

Once feeling this deeply, the equality of friendship, claimed by our boys' clumsy tongues, will have in it a precious meaning that we shall be careful not to injure. Though we shall not cease to labor to teach them better manners!

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So, slowly, we admit the hopefulness of the new ideals in methods and manners. In morals imagination has a harder task, but again memory helps us out.

There are certain fundamentals of right and wrong which the generations cannot alter, but in the minor moralities, how we ourselves differ from our forebears! Some of us remember that we were not allowed to play cards; dancing and the playhouse were not for well-brought-up folk such as we. Unreasonable and even ridiculous as such ideas seem to us now, there can be no question that the previous generation suffered very much when we declared our independence. But can we believe that our elders would have been justified in insisting that we should do only what they considered right? Some did so insist, and some of us remember the catastrophes that followed. May memory save us from like mistakes!

But in this matter of morals it will not

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be enough merely to avoid the mistake of insisting upon our ideals; we must be able to see the value and the hope in ideals radically different from our own. We, perhaps, hold to certain modifications of the old principles; we smile at the assertion that cards are sinful, but we cannot see our young people (or people old enough to know better) playing Bridge for money without a shudder. Nor will all the imagination in the world convince some of us that such playing is anything but downright wrong-doing. No, we shall not change our positive convictions; but we shall be willing to let the younger people reach their convictions in their own way. They may have to burn their fingers at Bridge before they learn the lesson that we could teach them comfortably in a few words.

But probably their way of learning is by burned fingers. Consequences are often painful, but they are very in-

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structive! We never profited by the experiences of our elders; why should these children profit by our experiences? Yet it takes a good deal of imagination to be patient and hopeful, and, after a certain fair presentation of our views, content not to interfere.

Perhaps the change in beliefs, which goes with the ethical change, is even harder to meet; yet it, too, has its noble side. It may be humiliating to discover that our dictum concerning eternal truth is not enough; but unless we are very narrow and very mean we will admit that the young soul has a right to search out truth for itself. And if the search is earnest, and not flippant, it is something to rejoice in; even though our children write "not proved" over all our dearest beliefs.

But even with our best endeavors it is useless to deny that this is a bad moment for us, sitting up on our shelves and look-

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ing on. It is a moment when, perhaps, most of all it is well to look back and remember how our fathers and mothers felt when we declined to believe that the world was made in six days of twenty-four hours each. To be sure, we know that, by-and-by, after denying this and questioning that, we opened our eyes upon a wider horizon of eternal things. Yet those dear old people who fastened their beliefs into a creed that seems to us pathetically cramped, but who lived by it lives that put ours to shame, grieved over us, just as we grieve over these creedless children.

Take the matter of church-going, which is the symbol of belief. It begins to be a burning issue in many families where the boy is old enough to go into business and the girl is just home from college. Sunday morning comes, and the youngsters begin to growl; they go to church, perhaps, if it is insisted upon, but at what

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cost of temper all around! "When a man works for six days," the boy will announce, "he needs recreation, hang it!" And the girl says something equally positive and ungracious.

Yes, it is certainly a painful moment. But if we see no hope in it, it is plain that our years have taught us neither patience nor trust. Our heavenly vision comes to us inside the four walls of a church; yet dare we affirm that it cannot come outside those four walls? What right have we to say that the children, lifting up their eyes unto the hills on some of their churchless Sundays, may not have glimpses of divine things that will make life deep and rich? We distrust the heavenly vision if we do so affirm!

As, sitting upon our shelves, we think soberly of this whole situation, we begin to see, if honest with ourselves and our

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young people, that the changes about which we worry ourselves are superficial; the real and fundamental things, the things that mean character, are eternal. It is only their expression which has altered. What does it matter how our girls wear their hair — though they look like owls in an ivy-bush; what does it really matter, the stumbling, stupid slang our boys talk, if honor and truth and love remain? Admit! we differ upon a hundred points — but they are all minor points; in essentials, in love and truth and honor, we can meet the children if we will take the trouble to do so.

To meet them does not mean that we shall give up our churches or decline to read our Bibles; nor shall we stay out in canoes ourselves until midnight, or wear our skirts up to our knees on the golf-links, or acquire the manners of A.'s girls, or speak the strange tongue of D.'s boys. If we try to do these things, we

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shall not only fail, but we shall be ridiculous, which is the cruelest kind of failure. No, we shall not acquire the methods or the manners or the minor morals of our young people; but we shall *understand the young people*. We shall be gentle with their new ideals — indeed, we shall be more than this; we shall be respectful of them.

And when we have reached this point, behold an astonishing thing: we are not on the shelf any longer! We are of the elect.

For the sign of the elect is the possibility of growth in ideals!

AUNTS

CONSIDERING mothers, the wonder is that children turn out as well as they do. And considering children, the wonder is that mothers survive.

Such, at least, is the opinion of a cloud of witnesses composed of those who have ceased to be children, and have not become mothers. "What," declares the spinster or the childless mistress of a household—"what will happen to those awful Jones children? How will they turn out? Mrs. Jones gives them absolutely no training!" And then she looks at Mrs. Jones, and her wonder grows; for the demands of the growing Joneses upon

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their mother—their noise, their mumps, their clothes, their squabbles—are enough, she thinks, to send Mrs. Jones into her grave, if only for refuge.

Yet the fact is Mrs. Jones survives. And the chances are that the children will turn out fairly well. The observer admits that she even turned out fairly well herself—though she was once a child; and her own mother, bless her heart! survived to be many times a grandmother.

Now, as one reflects upon the anomaly of children who ought to be ruined, but are not, and mothers who ought to be dead, but are not, it is plain that there must be an explanation, and some people believe that the explanation is found in one word: *Aunts*.

This paper is an appreciation of the aunt, the unmarried sister or sister-in-law. It is an effort to show that she is the Buffer of civilization. She does not often recognize her important function, nor do

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other people; and so, naturally, she is not always valued as she should be. Certainly she has not received much attention either sociologically or imaginatively. Science has concerned itself deeply enough with other human relationships; and the supremest art has devoted itself to their expression—there is a whole literature of paternity, and the great pictures of the world are of motherhood and brotherhood. But science ignores aunts; and when it comes to the arts, who can recall a work of art which seriously and nobly sets itself to reveal the genius of aunthood? Not one! We have Maggie Tulliver's aunts, to be sure, and Pierre Loti has drawn very exquisitely the tenderness of an adult for the memories of his own childhood in connection with a gentle old creature, *la tante Claire*. One can recall a dozen such instances, perhaps, but they are all sporadic; there is no *aunt literature*, as there

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is a maternal, or filial, or amical literature.

And yet in the social and moral world the aunt has a unique importance; an importance which becomes apparent as soon as we recognize her as a Buffer; for the moment we do we are obliged to take her seriously. She, meantime, you can depend upon it, is taking us seriously! She looks on at, let us say, Mrs. Jones's domestic situation and wonders; she has her own thoughts, this observing aunt! Mrs. Jones, however, or any mother of children, returns the aunt's puzzled look with equal wonder, but with pity, too; because a human creature who suffers the emptiness of a childless life is an object of pity.

"I think old maids are the saddest things!" the mother says, toiling up stairs with sleepy Johnny heavy in her arms and small Mary tugging at her skirts, and perhaps the two older children howling in the sitting-room because the biggest

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brother has snatched their picture-book away from them. "I think they are to be pitied. Nothing to do; nothing to love—except other people's children. My husband's sister adores my children, of course, and I must say she is an immense help to me. But still, it isn't as if they were her own, poor thing!"

And then she proceeds to put her little people to bed—to wash their faces, and hear their prayers, and tuck them up for the night; then she goes to her own bed worn out—and happy. She has no comprehension of any other point of view. The shrill voices down-stairs did not trouble her; the destruction of things (*as destruction*, apart from expense) did not worry her; her own fatigue is almost delicious to her. Perhaps she falls asleep pitying "Aunty";—and hidden underneath the pity there is just a little contempt, too.

This every good woman and mother will instantly deny.

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"Contempt for Aunty? Of course not! but I'm sorry for her, poor thing!"

All the same, it is contempt, and it is unavoidable. It is probably a cosmic emotion, far deeper than Christian ethics which forbid contempt for any other human creature. It is the race recognition that something is wrong. The complete man or woman must know the complete gamut of the elemental human experiences, and the childless being cannot know it. No imagination will supply to such a being an understanding of the "passion of the dam"; no sympathy can reveal to her soul the sense of immortality, felt (unconsciously) by the individual who is continued and continued in her race. Both these things may be accepted by the brain of the childless adult; but they cannot be known by the heart. Of course the mother does not go through any such philosophical explanation of her pity and her unconscious contempt. She sits plac-

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idly darning the children's stockings (the holes in the knees are appalling!) and says, "It's too bad about Aunty."

It is. But not entirely in the way the mother means. It is too bad that Aunty is incomplete; it is too bad that she has not known, or may never know, the great elemental emotions of humanity — the love of man and woman, the passion of maternity, the human birthright of anxiety, of care, of grief, of supreme joy in the deepest human relationships; these things are indeed too bad. But it is also too bad that the mother does not sufficiently appreciate the fact that Aunty's stultification has resulted in the creation of a *buffer*.

Of course there are mothers here and there who do appreciate it; just as there are aunts whose love and whose joy in service leave no consciousness of fatigue or *ennui*. There are aunts who honestly prefer to hang over Johnny's crib when

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he is taking his noon nap, instead of going out to luncheon; aunts who find it better fun to play with children not their own than to seek an amusement personal to themselves. These aunts are generally very young; or else this disposition on their part is shown to Johnny because he is the eldest, rather than to the half-dozen who follow Johnny like a descending flight of steps; or perhaps they are so potentially maternal that human young (plus family feeling) are irresistibly attractive to them. Such aunts, with sweet and happy unconsciousness of the fact, are probably rehearsing their own part of motherhood, to be played (if Heaven is kind) with divine joy later on. But these aunts are the exception; just as the mothers who appreciate their Buffers are the exception. The ordinary aunt—the good, conscientious, kindly, affectionate woman, who is tired, or bored, or critical, the aunt to whom mother and children

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cling with serene selfishness—is the aunt of whom this “*Appreciation*” is written.

And the mother to whom it is especially dedicated is the ordinary mother—good, too, and conscientious, on her own lines; a little dulled by maternity, and full of the dreadful selfishness of human love—a selfishness which can be as intense as the selfishness of hate. This mother knows that her husband’s sister is devoted to the little Joneses; and she is glad of it, and grateful for it (because she really is a nice woman); but she is almost always unaware that her sister-in-law is standing between her and the onslaught of her offspring; standing also between her offspring and her own amiable slackness, which relations-in-law call by the hard name of *spoiling*. For Auntie has her own opinions about these dear children (they really are dear to her); and sometimes it takes all her good sense to refrain from sharing her opinion

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with Mrs. Jones. Aunty could point out to her sister-in-law that Johnny sits with his mouth open; "gapes at you!" Aunty says to herself. That May holds her spoon awkwardly;—"I wouldn't let a child of mine have such table manners!" That the two older children have very disagreeable voices and shuffle dreadfully with their feet. Aunty, being wise, keeps this information to herself; but she acts upon it when she is alone with the little Joneses!

When Aunty, in the character of Buffer, steps in, and says to Tom's wife: "Now, dear, you go and lie down. I'll take care of the children this afternoon,"—she does so not merely because it is a joy and privilege to spend several hours in the society of the little Joneses. She does so because she believes it to be her duty to help Mrs. Jones; if there is a second reason, it may be for the fun of being with the children. But that second

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reason does not always exist; the first carries Auntie to the battle-ground of the nursery, and gives the mother her nap—the nap that helps her to finally survive those little Joneses.

So all the long afternoon the aunt is on hand to amuse the little people; but also to inculcate, not too mildly, rules of unselfishness and orderliness. It is at such times that she takes the opportunity to tell Johnny to close his lips; when May has her bread and milk at five, Auntie puts the little fingers under instead of over the spoon; she shows the two shuffling children how to walk. Thus, silently, patiently, disgustedly very often, does the Buffer fulfil her functions; looking on and watching the children while they play locomotive cars with chairs that screech over the floor; keeping the peace when the boys *scrap* for the same picture-book and the girls take Solomon's plan for sharing a doll; doing her part in fetch-

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ing and carrying; pulling mittens over pudgy and apparently boneless little hands; buttoning gaiters; finding mislaid hats; afterwards putting all these garments away, and washing dirty faces and squirming ears; and when at last her brother's wife wakes up, refreshed and ready for the evening fray, retiring from the scene, tired out; glad that she has done her duty to mother and children; truly fond of her little nieces and nephews, but feeling, perhaps (inarticulately, of course), that there is something to be said for Herod.

Mrs. Jones, when she wakes up and comes down-stairs to tea, is sincerely grateful—(because she *is* a nice woman;) but there are nine chances in ten that she thinks—if she thinks at all—that the afternoon has meant to Auntie just what it would have meant to her. If she could only look into Auntie's mind and see the hot thoughts of reform for the little Jones-

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es, how astonished she would be! Instead, the very next day, she will watch her sister-in-law plait pigtails, or pin on bibs, or cut the mutton at dinner into small cubes, or get down on her knees and pull on tight rubbers; she will see her hunt up old paint-boxes, and produce old gift-books or new magazines to be daubed during a rainy afternoon; and she will look on as if it were all a matter of course. She never knows that Aunty is controlling an impulse to express a strong opinion. She does not know it, because she herself would not mind the squabbling, or the noise of the chairs; she would not feel annoyed at the mislaid hats, or the loose button-holes of the gaiters, or the touch of May's sticky fingers on her fresh waist.

In fact, unless enlightened by Heaven or a candid and unprejudiced friend, Mrs. Jones is constitutionally unable to understand the feelings of her Buffer.

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And this is a real pity about Aunty.

If Mrs. Jones could understand, her resulting appreciation would do much to tide Aunty over many bad moments. The Buffer, going home alone in the twilight, falls to wondering at her sister-in-law's ability to bear successive afternoons such as this she has just passed; forgetting, poor girl (for she, also, does not quite understand the situation)—forgetting that she is incomplete, that she is without that prop of maternal instinct which makes it possible to endure and even to enjoy the little Joneses. And makes it possible, too, to be blind to their defects—those defects so obvious to the clear-eyed, tired aunt, walking home at dusk, and thinking what she might have done for her own amusement or edification had she had her afternoon to herself.

Occasionally (and this is another thing that is a pity) Aunty does not have any

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home to which to walk—she lives with the Joneses. This is unfortunate, but, of course, sometimes it cannot be helped. Yet how infinitely better it would be for her if she could have a foot on the earth, quite of her own, somewhere outside Mrs. Jones's hospitable little roof—even if it were a single room under somebody else's roof, to which she could retire after a day on the field, so to speak.

“What!” cries Mrs. Jones — “Aunty happier not to live with Tom and me! Why, I never heard of anything so horrid. She's a great *deal* better off here than she could be anywhere else. I'm sure I give up my second spare room to her, and I do everything I can; but still,” Mrs. Jones says, beginning to be hurt, “perhaps we don't give her enough.”

Well, come now: what do Mr. and Mrs. Jones give Aunty? To begin with, her board and lodging; the privilege of being with the little Joneses every minute of

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the day (and sometimes night, too, if the house is small). The joy of listening to her brother and sister-in-law's talk about their own affairs or cares, about their happiness or anxieties, or (occasionally) it is her privilege to listen to their differences and squabbles. When Mrs. Jones has a little party she offers Auntie the chance to arrange the parlor and the flowers; to give up her own bedroom as a dressing-room to the guests; to run out a dozen times into the kitchen to see that things are going smoothly, and to make sure that the ice-cream is taken out of the moulds at the proper moment. Mrs. Jones also gives Auntie the opportunity to help with the weekly mending. "But I'm sure," Mrs. Jones flames out at this, "I help her with her clothes!" Of course she does, when she has time (for Mrs. Jones is a *nice* woman); but it stands to reason, as every mother knows, that she hasn't very much time to help with

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Aunty's dress-making, with all those children on her hands.

The amount of it is, Aunty receives in her brother's house such scraps of life as may be left over.

This is not because the Joneses are unkind or ungenerous. It is because they are human—that is all.

The family life is and must and ought to be the first thing. Aunty is forever on the outside of it—by a law of nature, for which no one is to blame. Wait until she gets a family of her own, then she will know how it is herself! With the best intentions in the world, Mrs. Jones cannot make an outsider an insider. Therefore Aunty receives in the good, kind, conscientious Jones household only what it is able to give—namely, second-hand joys and interests and duties. And that is why, if she can add even a very, very small income to her excellent common-sense, she will go away and find a

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little home of her very, very own, even if it is only one room. This would not lessen her love for her nephews and nieces—indeed, it might increase it—nor would it make her any less anxious for their well-being, or less ready to act as their Buffer.

Well, well; poor little Mrs. Jones! It is easy enough to criticise; but with a limited income, and a small house, and four or five children—how can she do as much for her husband's sister as she would like to, and how can she give those five youngsters the training and discipline that Aunt, by the very fact and grace of being an outsider, can give so well? Nobody means to blame Mrs. Jones for not telling Johnny, over and over, twenty times a day, to close his lips; or not changing May's spoon at breakfast, dinner, and supper; or for not calling the two others back two or three times an hour to walk properly;—she can't do everything!

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But in regard to Auntie there is one thing she can do: she can set herself deliberately to see how all these things look to her sister-in-law. She can imagine—but there! that is the secret of achievement in life: *imagination*. And perhaps Mrs. Jones was not born with imagination, or, if born with it, she has permitted it to become atrophied for want of use. Imagination is the one thing that most Mrs. Joneses need. It is not that they are unkind to Auntie, or more than ordinarily selfish, or even that they are merely indifferent to her personal happiness or enjoyment. It is that they *do not apply imagination to her concerns*. They have no keen realization of what it would mean to them to spend their lives going up and down other people's stairs!

Let the mother, some tired afternoon, when Auntie has sent her off for a much-needed nap, look, open-eyed, at Auntie's lot; let her ask herself even one question:

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“How would I like to take care of the *Robinson* children, for instance, for a whole afternoon?” “But those Robinsons are not nearly so nice as my children!” she thinks, instantly resentful at such a comparison.

Perhaps they are—to Mrs. Robinson. Let the mother work out, with her rusty, unused imagination, several parallels of this kind, and she will begin to be uncomfortable about Aunty; she will not take her nap on that particular afternoon. Perhaps she will even be slightly unhappy for a day or two; but that won't hurt her, and it may be most beneficial for Aunty. For out of her discomfort (may it be very keen!) will grow certain resolutions:

First—Not to take it for granted that Aunty likes just what she likes—at least in the same degree.

Second—Not to take it for granted that Aunty is interested in her interests—at least in the same degree.

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Third—Not to take it for granted that Aunty is particularly favored in being privileged to live under the Joneses' roof—or to frequent it every day for the sake of the little Joneses.

Fourth—Never to forget that Aunty is a Buffer!

THE PASSING OF DORA

THERE has arisen a generation that knows not Dora. And more than this, taste has so changed that even if Dickens were to-day the household word that he was forty years ago, so that a reference to Dora would be understood, her name would only arouse the comment of Mr. F.'s aunt: "*I hate a fool*"; for Dora's prettiness and silliness and feebleness are beyond the imagination of 1904; her charm is unintelligible.

But Dickens, as well as his Dora, is, for the most part, unknown. Very few young people nowadays read these old novels—but how well we older folk know

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them! The tall, narrow books, bound in black and gold, with execrable type and rough wood-cuts, are dear to our souls; and what friends they hold!—how well we know David Copperfield, and Paul Dombey, and Little Nell, and Mr. Wemmick, and Pip—one does not know where to stop when one begins to name these old friends with whom we are as well, and sometimes better, acquainted than with our next-door neighbor. It is a little startling to us to find in these days an allusion to the “Boofer Lady” received with a puzzled stare; or the declaration that one “will never desert Mr. Micawber,” passed over without a twinkle of recognition. The fact is there are so many books of to-day that the books of yesterday cannot be re-read; and as for the books of day before yesterday, they are sold for waste paper! The novels of the great caricaturist do not suffer this last fate, as convention demands their

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presence in every library; but the dust gathers on their tops and their leaves are yellowing inside.

To the elderly folk, whom these old books enlightened and enlivened a generation ago, the name *Dora* tells a story, foolish, it must be admitted, absolutely unreal in the electric light of to-day, but tender and touching, and with a peculiar charm of its own.

Dora—this for the benefit of younger people—was a very pretty, very foolish young lady, with whom Mr. David Copperfield fell distractingly in love. A conversation between them, on the occasion of David's confiding to his beloved the unpromising state of his finances, reveals not only his love, but Dora's mental caliber:

"Dora, my own dearest! I am a beggar!"

"How can you be such a silly thing," replied Dora, "as to sit there telling such stories? I'll make Jip bite you!"

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In spite of this threat, David persists in telling her of his ruin; he is burning with ardor, and full of joy in the prospect of working for her. "A crust well earned," cries David; at which Dora bursts out that she does not want to hear about crusts; "Jip must have a mutton chop every day at twelve or he will die!" David's enthusiasm is dampened, but he promises the chop, and then warms again to the need of bravery and his intention to crush obstacles. At this Dora turns faint, cries, moans; she is so overcome that it is some time before she is sufficiently calm to "make Jip stand on his hind legs for toast."

It was at this juncture that Dora's father, with obvious common-sense, forbade an engagement between these two children; but a kind fate, removing him to another world, gave Dora and her dog Jip into the care of two amiable and sentimental aunts, who, by-and-by, in

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spite of a sense of the impropriety of love-making, consented to an engagement, and after a while the babes were married and departed (with Jip) to make a home of their own.

Is there any wonder that the present generation of girls does not know Dora—or care to make her acquaintance? Apparently there is nothing in common between this silly, pretty, useless little creature and our strenuous and startlingly practical young woman, whom the fashion of the day calls Jane or Sarah or some equally uncompromising name. Jane and Sarah might be differentiated yet a little further—Jane being, for the sake of illustration, the girl who is (as a boy called her) “shouting athletic”; and Sarah, a college graduate, who has a healthy instinct for out-of-door life, but who has also domestic inclinations and great common-sense. Sarah is nearer to Dora than is Jane, yet even between

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Sarah and Dora there is a marked difference in ideals and standards; this difference shows itself early in Sarah's engagement. . . .

The proposal is probably as palpitating as was David's own; it is blundering, and perhaps curt, and very likely slangy; but the two hearts beat very hard, and Sarah looks down, and ties her handkerchief in knots, or breaks her fan to pieces. But when Reginald (as the girls' names grow austere, the boys' names are becoming flowery)—when Reginald stammers something to the effect that he never saw a girl he—he thought so—so corking jolly, don't you know; and he doesn't suppose she thinks anything of him, but—but won't she just say "yes," don't you know? When Reginald gets these words out of his tight throat, Sarah manages to say, very low, "I—I don't mind, Reggie." Then Reginald measures her finger for the ring, and kisses it during the operation;

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and Sarah, in the supreme feminine moment of happy exultation, lets him spoon to his heart's content—but not indefinitely. Even while he is still holding that pretty left hand she begins to be a little silent, a little sober; she is thinking that she must get ready for the responsibilities that that ring will imply. She must learn how to do this, she must ask her mother how to manage that; she must calculate how many potatoes and theatre tickets can be bought on Reginald's salary. She is full of interest, and very much in earnest.

As the engagement proceeds she and Reginald take long walks in the moonlight, discussing whether it will be more economical for him to take luncheons at a restaurant or to come up to the flat every day at noon. "I'll see you if I do that," says Reginald, ardently; "it's worth the car-fare to see you!" And Sarah says, sternly, blushing

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happily in the moonlight, "Don't be silly!"

It was not thus that Dora took her engagement. The silliness that Sarah reprobates in Reginald is wisdom compared with Dora's silliness. Of course an engaged girl is expected to be more or less foolish; that is youth and human nature all the world over. But Dora's foolishness! . . .

David, just before his marriage, presents his adored with a cook-book, a set of tablets, and some pencils, so that she might "practise housekeeping." Result: "The cookery book made Dora's head ache, and the figures made her cry. They wouldn't add up, she said. So she rubbed them out, and drew little nosegays and likenesses of me and Jip all over the tablets. Then," says poor David, "I playfully tried verbal instruction in domestic matters. . . . Sometimes, . . . when we passed a butcher's shop, I would say,

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‘Now suppose, my pet, that we were married, and you were going to buy a shoulder of mutton for dinner, would you know how to buy it?’ My pretty little Dora’s face would fall, and she would make her mouth into a bud again, as if she would very much prefer to shut mine with a kiss; . . . then she would think a little, and reply, perhaps, with great triumph, ‘Why, the butcher would know how to sell it, and what need *I* know?’”

No wonder that Sarah, going faithfully to cooking-school, taking lessons in house-keeping, hunting up the cheap shops on the side streets so that Reginald’s money shall not be wasted in the fine stores on the avenue—no wonder that she sniffs at the mention of Dora, and declines to read about her. “I’ve got to read up on the chemistry of food,” says Sarah. “I find that cheese is only fourteen cents a pound, and porterhouse steak is thirty cents; but cheese supplies all the nitrogen that

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the human body needs, so I'm going to buy a chafing-dish (if I don't get a silver one for a wedding-present), and give Reggie Welsh rabbits every night."

Poor David received no such chemical consideration! Dora's housekeeping was unimaginable.

"My dearest life," David said one day, "do you think Mary Anne has any idea of time?"

"Why, Doady?" inquired Dora.

"My love, because it's five, and we were to have dinner at four." Then the poor hungry husband adds that perhaps his little wife might remonstrate with Mary Anne.

"Oh no, please! I couldn't, Doady!"

"Why not, my love?"

"Oh, because I am such a little goose," said Dora, "and she knows I am!" (Here, at least, is a tribute to the common-sense of Mary Anne.)

But David still urges, mildly.

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"No, no! please!" cried Dora, with a kiss; "don't be a naughty Blue Beard! Don't be serious!"

"... my love, it is not exactly comfortable to have to go without one's dinner."

"N-n-no!" replied Dora, faintly.

"My love, how you tremble!"

"Because I know you are going to scold me," exclaimed Dora, in despair. "I didn't marry to be reasoned with."

Poor David! This is not silliness; it is idiocy. At least so it would be called nowadays, when Sarah, instead of weeping over recipes, would have gone out into the kitchen long before the hour of waiting had passed, put on an apron, tucked up her sleeves, and cooked a delightful dinner for her hungry husband.

But just here some old-fashioned person asks a question: Would David have been quite so fond of such a capable, rational, practical Dora? Fonder! if he had any sense, cries our cooking-school

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Sarah, with quick contempt for both the silly wife and the fatuous husband. She has no sympathy with either of the pair; furthermore, she cannot even understand the situation. They are both fools; that would be her only comment. It is evident that the feminine ideal of which Dora was the embodiment has gone out of fashion as completely as her hoop-skirt or her shawl or her queer little poke-bonnet!

As for Jane, she finds Dora's mental and physical qualities even more unthinkable than Sarah does, for Sarah's domestic instinct supplies a certain half-maternal pity for what is weak and helpless, even if it is accompanied by idiocy. Jane would treat Dora as a roaring joke—if one may quote Jane's own words. Her vocabulary is limited, and it might be a "howling joke," or, if she is a very highly developed Jane, "a rotten joke." The mere picture of Dora would send Jane into

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“yells of laughter”—(still, for the sake of exactness, to quote Jane herself). Yet, though Jane can hardly believe it, her father—or certainly her grandfather—finds Dora’s picture hidden somewhere in his heart—and he thinks it far more charming than the latest snap-shot of Jane herself, standing, hatless, bare-armed, feet well apart, raising her brassey for a whizzing stroke. In this old picture, Dora is clinging to the arm of her proud and tender David; her little bonnet is very far back on her head; her curls are brought forward over her pretty, blushing cheeks and shadow her clear and very gentle eyes—eyes that fill with tears at a hard word or a sharp look; she wears an enormous crinoline, and her frock is ruffled up to her waist; her little feet are thrust into slippers that fasten with a crossed elastic around her ankles, and sometimes a scarf hangs across her shoulders or a fan dangles from her wrist;

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and she holds a smelling-bottle—for Dora grows faint very often, and even swoons occasionally.

“Hang it!” says Jane, irritated to be obliged to contemplate this ridiculous picture, “she’s a perfect idiot!”—(Jane’s language would not lead one to infer that she ever had a grandfather! Yet the fact is, she is, generally speaking, a well-born girl, her father and mother being persons of refinement and cultivation, who shiver at her slang and make futile attempts to check it).

If Jane herself may be considered a pattern of what a girl ought to be, her comment upon Dora is not unreasonable, though it may be inelegant; but Jane cannot bother about elegance any more than about femininity. Jane, with a whimpering mother in the background, has done her best to eliminate femininity. She dresses as much like the boys as she dares; she uses their slang; she plays their

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games; she imitates their hare-brained pluck, their apparently stolid indifference to prettiness and daintiness; she dreads being ladylike quite as much as they do. She is a first-rate companion when a man is roughing it; she can pick up her end of the canoe on a long carry as well as the next fellow; she can play here eighteen holes without a pause; she doesn't fuss about clothes; she is rough-haired, brown-armed, loud-voiced. Reginald would have an armful if, like David, he should attempt to lift her over a brook that she might not wet her little feet; but, for that matter, Jane's feet are not little, and her heavy, hob-nailed walking-boots spare him any such weighty necessity. Besides, she could carry Reginald *almost* as easily as he could carry her! In fact, she apparently differs from him only in the bitter fact that convention insists that she shall wear petticoats.

And what is the result? Except to

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her humiliated mother and shocked female relations she is a "good fellow." There is no possible doubt of that. "Does Reginald like her?" inquires again the old-fashioned and doubtful voice. Indeed he does! He finds her very comfortable to get along with; he does not have to take any trouble when he is with her; he feels no restraint in manners or conversation. He reclines on the canoe cushions puffing cigarette smoke into her face while she does the paddling. "Yes," he was heard to say recently on the porch of a summer hotel—"yes, the girls are first-rate, don't you know; they're corking jolly to go off with; but," he ruminated, scowling out from under a shock of yellow hair as rough and sunburned as Jane's own, "they ain't the kind that's makin' a fellow feel romantic, don't you know?"

Ah, Reggie, how right you are! "They ain't makin' you feel romantic!" And

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you want to feel romantic; the "other fellow" is well enough; "corking jolly to go off with"; but life is not made up of "going off," and you do want something else.

It is here that David's grandson is really more honest and wholesome than Dora's granddaughter—he is true to the everlasting masculine, and makes no pretence to anything else. He respects Jane just as he would a man on his own team; and he takes about as much trouble to make himself agreeable to her as he would to the man. He is far more courteous to Sarah; and as for his behavior to some pretty creature who shrinks at the sight of a caterpillar, and is afraid of thunder, and could not lift the bow end of a canoe to save her life—he is David over again! There is apt to be a brief period when Reginald prefers the pretty goose even to Sarah; and for a time he talks about her to Jane, who sympathizes with him, and

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gives him good advice. And in this connection behold a fact as old and as unreasonable as human nature:—*a man does not marry a woman because she is able to give good advice.* This shows, no doubt, the foolishness of men; but it is the truth, and has to be taken into account when one wonders why it is that Jane does not, as a rule, marry as early as Sarah, or even as some prehistoric and exasperatingly feminine goose.

There is one thing to be said, however, for Jane: although she gives good advice, and talks, man to man, about the goose, and sympathizes in her rough way with the sighing lover, she does it sometimes with a strange burning in her own heart. And it is in this little stinging, unacknowledged, despised pain that Jane's future salvation lies. It may not save her until her hard and angular youth has faded into middle-aged singleness; but then it will probably become so keen that it will

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turn her into a positive Lydia Languish! She must take lessons from Dora in time if she would spare us that horror. Not in Dora's imbecility, but in certain qualities fundamental to life, which made the pure gold of Dora's character.

But very likely that is too much to expect; Jane is so supremely satisfied with herself that she will only realize she is an artificial being when artificiality has become natural, and the loud, horsy girl has stiffened into a loud, horsy spinster—most unlovely and, too often, unlovable.

The fact is, we must build our hopes for the future upon our boys' unchanged, wholesome, honest masculinity — a masculinity which rejects the unsexed woman, and creates for women a standard of gracious and intelligent goodness; just as the normal woman's demand for truth and courage and tenderness creates a standard for men. Sarah recognizes this standard of moral and intellectual sweet-

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ness, though she embodies it in a somewhat rudimentary form; but Jane—will Jane ever see that good health does not necessarily imply rough, sunburned arms; that good-fellowship does not involve loud voices, or “loud mouths,” as the boys call the girls’ slang; that good sense does not demand all lack of reserve in conversation? Will she ever acquire *charm*?—the word that sums up all those qualities of heart and head and brings into the world of toil and sport and business something which we call loveliness?

Nobody wants Dora’s silliness or uselessness; but her fundamental femininity—that the world does want, and indeed will have, for nature can probably be trusted to make Jane extinct.

Sarah has long since perceived what poor little Dora never could have perceived, that the heart alone is idiotic; she knows, though she may not talk about it, that the head alone is unlovely and unlovable.

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With these two things in her sensible brain Sarah will draw a swift conclusion: graciousness and love and honor, the delight of sweet reasonableness, make the ideal woman; they are the combination of heart and head which is the perfect human life.

May Jane's eyes open to the same fact!

“LOVE MY DOG”

THERE are some people in this world who do not believe that Love and Quarrelling are ever united. Such lucky folk grow joyously dogmatic upon the subject: To put Love and Quarrelling together, they declare, is to set down a contradiction in terms!

It is generally a woman who ventures upon such blithe optimism, and if pressed for proof she says, cheerfully: “Why, if you love people, you *can't* quarrel with them. I never in my life quarrelled with anybody I loved!” Which reveals to the envious listener that there are some temperaments (generally feminine) which

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must needs make personal experience the basis of opinion. There is a bit of gossip concerning a husband and wife that illustrates this feminine inclination: Said the husband (a little sharply), “Women make everything personal!” Replied the wife (a little pathetically), “*I don’t.*”

Yet the happy folk who believe that Love may not know bitterness and anger and revenge must have heard the aphorisms and proverbs that confess the experience of The Race: “There is no quarrel so bitter as a family quarrel”; “Cain and Abel”; “Lovers’ quarrels,” etc., etc. When the Optimist hears these sayings she is quick to retort that when husbands and wives, and fathers and sons, and brothers and sisters quarrel, it merely means they do not love each other. When this statement is made, it is just as well to bring the conversation to a close, for the Optimist has revealed her absolute ignorance of life.

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And, anyhow, it is far better to let such happy, unbelieving folk alone than try to teach them bitter truths. If Heaven has spared them this particular knowledge of our poor, squalid, divine, human nature, with its strange contradictions of good and bad—if hard experience or pitiful sympathy has not revealed to them that Love may sometimes walk, unworthily, hand in hand with anger and spite, they may be ignorant, but they are certainly comfortable. And it is pleasant to know that somebody is comfortable!—even though the big world outside is lying travailing in sorrow and pain.

And yet comfort is not the best thing in life, after all. It is not the highest thing. Wisdom is better than ease. And in this strange paradox of Love and Quarrelling that thoughtful and sorry people see or experience, wisdom is our only refuge. Wisdom does not deny the

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miserable fact of quarrelsome Love; it faces it and admits it and explains it. Wisdom tracks down the quarrelsome instinct, and finds it rooted in egotism; it tracks down human passion, and finds it rooted in self; it tracks down the tenderest devotion, and finds it, obscurely, but still surely, rooted in this same organic base of human living. And as soon as sore and angry and loving people can realize that one human quality can be responsible for two such cruelly different emotions as love and anger, they can with a reasonable amount of hope go to work to make things better.

One admits at once that egotism is not a pretty word. The Optimist frantically repudiates it, at least for Love. And for Quarrelling, too: “If I quarrel,” she says, “it is only because I know I am right; it isn’t egotism, it is principle, with me! It is never for any merely selfish end. And that just proves that I couldn’t

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quarrel with any one I loved, because I always give in at once. That is my pleasure," she adds, piously.

Happy Optimist to have an *ego* that prefers to give in! Yet, after all, the preference for giving in, although a more pleasing form of egotism than is commonly prevalent, is still egotism—personal inclination is responsible for this agreeable trait. However, the Optimist will never admit this; and it is as provoking a statement as that "unselfishness is a form of selfishness," or any other philosophical abstraction which leads so easily to a moral *reductio ad absurdum*. It is enough to say that when Love quarrels with its beloved, it is generally from an instinct to thrust upon the beloved its own ideals or hopes or purposes; it is a *demand for unity*. Now, the "demand for unity" is the very heart and soul of Love. But it is also all there is to Quarrelling.

“LOVE MY DOG”

There is a certain little foolish saying that sums it all up—

“Love me, love my dog.”

“You love me! you are mine!—then you will think my thoughts, love my loves, desire my desires—you will be one with me. No? You can’t? You don’t agree with me in religion? in politics? You don’t agree with me about our grandfather’s will? about impressionist pictures? about the best method of making bread? the state of the weather? the way I wear my hair? Good heavens! do you call that love? You *must* agree with me; you shall!” Clash! clamor! struggle! Misery, bitterness — court - rooms, even. And underneath, *Love*.

This is egotism—the primal human passion which created Love, and at the same time hammered into every language phrases about Love and Quarrelling; egotism, which means individuality, and without which we would be but poor,

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soft things of elemental jelly—but which is responsible for the cruelest pain poor Love can suffer.

Just see how it is all about us—except in the household of that blessed Optimist. . . . One need not think of the dreadful illustrations, the awful things that must needs take the court-room as a stage, but the hundreds of home happenings, the bickerings and fault-finders and small quarrels that we see or hear about us. The Optimist has no personal experience with them, and for that let her thank God; but she must be aware that in her brother-in-law's family the girls are always squabbling; and that her next-door neighbor doesn't get on with his eldest son; and that poor Mr. Smith has a lot to bear from Mrs. Smith's tongue. The Optimist knows these things perfectly well; and she also knows that her brother-in-law's girls do really love each other. Just look at the way

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the eldest girl took care of the youngest one when she broke her ankle; why, she was perfectly devoted! As for that father next door, of course he loves his boy; he fairly starved himself to death to put the fellow through college; he would do anything for him! Mrs. Smith—yes, even Mrs. Smith, with her sharp tongue to that poor, long-suffering man—Mrs. Smith loves her husband; why, she would lie down and let him walk over her. She, too, “would do anything” for him; except, it appears, let the unfortunate man alone.

In every one of these cases, as the honest Optimist admits, there is real Love; but when she looks deeply enough she will find, in every case, that Love, with profound egotism, is insisting upon unity.

There are households founded in Love where Love sometimes commits actual suicide by this wicked insistence. Each separate, loving, tumultuous, angry heart

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is saying, "You must love my dog! You must think as I do, you must believe as I do, you must hate, even, as I do!" It is not uninstructional to run little quarrels down, once in a while, and find their root in this passionate demand of true and tender Love for unity. . . .

Take, for instance, that family of girls with their everlasting bickering. It is so much a matter of course with them that very often they are hardly conscious of it. But the Optimist once tried visiting in that house, and the memory of those few days or weeks is a nightmare! If only the girls could know the embarrassment and mortification that a visitor feels who listens to their quarrels! She would like to escape to her room, but if flight is impossible she assumes a sickly smile and tries to look as though it were all a joke; but she knows it is not a joke, and she vows silently that she will never visit these people again. Quarrels in this

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household begin almost always in that most pernicious habit of domestic criticism which is so frequent even in families of the better class. “You are a perfect fright in that dress,” Ethel tells Margaret, candidly; and Margaret retorts, “Well, you’re not a beauty yourself in that ridiculous new hat of yours.” If the Optimist had not heard remarks of this kind in a household of educated, cultivated, charming women — (Christian women, too, they call themselves)—she would not have believed that these comments were made by ladies. But they were, and others like them; and after a few more such stupid vulgarities there springs out a bitter flame of anger, a loud and silly quarrel that makes the poor visitor crimson with shame at the mean and miserable scene. And yet Ethel did nurse Margaret with a tenderness that was perfectly beautiful! They love each other, these two flushed and foolish girls; their love

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has been proved by cheerful self-sacrifice dozens of times; "but why on earth do they quarrel so?" the visitor thinks, shivering.

The explanation is obvious enough; Ethel loves Margaret; she wants her to look, and be, her very best. Ethel's idea of Margaret's looks involves a certain sort of gown; she says so, forcibly. Margaret, however, has her own idea; she protects it, and turns the attack upon Ethel's hat, which does not do Ethel justice.

The fact is, underneath the squalid Actual of egotism the Ideal is noble: "Be one with me!" Love is crying, "Think as I do; feel as I do. You shall!" If the beloved's egotism is equally strong, Love's demand results in fireworks of temper.

The quarrelling between the father and son is even more clearly Love's cry for unity. "I don't understand it," the de-

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spairing father says about his boy; “I’m sure I only want Bob’s own good. Why, bless my soul! I’ve given up my life to that boy. No man ever did more for his son than I’ve done for mine. Of course, I’m not a rich man, but there are mighty few rich men’s sons that have had any more advantages than my Bob has had. I’ve worked myself to death to give them to him! And now here he is, setting up his own Ebenezer, and saying he wants to go into some tomfool speculation, instead of settling down here in the business I built up for him. Well, he can do it. Let him try earning his own bread-and-butter. I’m blest if I give him a cent if he chooses to turn up his nose at my business.”

How well we all know this poor household! How well we know the mother’s efforts to “smooth things over,” the divided sympathy of the sisters, the complacent condolences of relatives — who

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always knew that Bob wouldn't turn out well, his father spoiled him so. But how clearly it all comes from Love's demand for unity. "Be one with me," the father's heart says; "it will be best for you; it will be happier for me." Poor, pathetic father's heart, with its pleading, determined egotism! what can the outcome be, when his demand for unity hurls itself against youth's inexperienced but equally determined egotism? Bob's sulky insistence upon a foolish course, and his father's foolish wisdom in forcing him into what is good for him, result too often in permanently hurt feelings; often in a loud and bitter quarrel that sometimes—sometimes—is never forgiven. This last is especially apt to be the case when the father, by *force majeure*, finally gets his own way, and the lad, without the salutary lesson of an unpleasant experience of his own, buckles down to what he does not want to do.

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And then take those Smiths. There is no situation where Love so persistently and foolishly — even madly — demands unity as in married life. Mrs. Smith loves Mr. Smith so much that she lives only to prove to him that his welfare depends on loving her dog. She lives only to make him good or comfortable or healthy—in her way. Sometimes, in her case, Love’s demand is for unity in religion (or, rather, in theology); and Mr. Smith’s disinclination to go to church causes the sincere, narrow wife a deep and frightened pain; she argues and entreats; she even (not being very well bred)—she even scolds. Sometimes it is a demand for unity of judgment as to health; she nags Mr. Smith about exercise or health-food until the poor man would rather be in his grave and be done with it! Sometimes it is only a wish to be united on the idea of comfort; and he is bidden to take a certain chair, or wear

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flannel or cotton or—sackcloth! so that he shall be as well as Mrs. Smith prays that he may be. The quarrels that spring from these well-meant demands are heart-breaking. Just plain, everyday wickedness may result from the woman's religious egotism; nervously ruined health is a frequent outcome of well-meant hygienic advice; and as for discomfort—is there any discomfort comparable to other people's ideas of comfort? Yet all the while Love stands clamoring for unity to the incessant and miserable accompaniment of quarrels. . . .

Every man and woman of us who has lived long enough to gain wisdom by experience will be obliged to admit this strange, sad union of Love and Quarrelling; but every one of us who has lived deeply enough will know that experience worketh hope, and will admit that when Love quarrels with its beloved it is only because this noble ideal of unity has run

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off the track, so to speak; a virtue has gone to seed; a divine quality has developed a defect. The outlook for quarrelsome Love is not so hopeless when we can understand this. See how it would work if those two squabbling sisters would either of them stop to remember that it is only Love, foolish, exasperating, unbalanced Love, that is responsible for the ill-bred domestic criticism that spoils the home life. If Margaret once honestly believed that Ethel's love made her so unpleasant, she would stop aghast; amused, no doubt, but very likely touched, and almost certainly silenced. And that would be the end of the quarrel.

It is just the same thing with the boy and his father; but in this case the understanding and forbearance must come mostly from the father, for youth, in the nature of things, has developed only a most rudimentary Love out of egotism. Yet just suppose the father had the cour-

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age and the patience to say, "Well, go ahead, my dear fellow, on your own lines, if you must." And then wait for the disillusioned home-coming, with its hearty, fattened - calf appetite, and its enduring friendship between father and son.

In the case of the husband and wife, Mr. Smith's realization that Mrs. Smith's most trying ways spring from this poor, crazy Love of hers would certainly help him to be patient. But, after all, the woman has the cure in her own hands. Not in a lesser, but a greater, Love. Not in contentment with a lack of unity, but in an ideal of unity so large that it holds the man's *ego* intact, unhurt, full of the dignity of his own personality. "Let us be one," Love will demand. But it will not define which one. For, indeed, a perfect union is never either one—it is both. Suppose Mrs. Smith could say, thoughtfully (not pathetically or resignedly—for pathos and resignation are enough to

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send Mr. Smith to the ends of the earth to escape her!): “Well, dear, I rather think you are mistaken; but, of course, do as you think best”; and let him stay at home and read his paper on Sunday; or even serve him with hot mince-pie every night at twelve, if his foolish *ego* shall so desire! In the latter instance, when the inevitable result follows, if she can refrain—(of course, to do this she must be a friend as well as a poor earthly wife)—if she can refrain from saying, “I told you so!” there will be no quarrel, but a unity that does not fear diversity. For when Smith recovers, though he may or may not continue the pie diet, he will not hate Mrs. Smith, as he would have done had she forced him into reluctant health. This course on her part allows the poor man to preserve his individuality; it does not force him to be good with her goodness, or wise with her wisdom. It allows him to love Mrs. Smith, and not

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her dog. Yet what unity such a course may develop between two people who love each other! Their thoughts may be quite diverse; their ideals, though of equal height, may be very far apart; their theories radically opposed; yet each so respects the other's personality that they differ with a delightful good-humor which really adds much to the interest of their lives. Such lovers may never agree on certain points, but they will never quarrel.

To bring about this sane friendship between people who love each other, respect for individuality is of course necessary. But such respect is, after all, an abstract thing, and cannot be cultivated in a moment. While waiting for it to struggle through our stony egotism, there is one thing we can do: we can vow that unless duty seriously and lovingly demands it, there shall be no *unmasked criticism between people who love each other.*

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Think how it would make for peace if domestic criticism were forbidden at every breakfast-table. Think of our own happiness if our brothers and sisters would stop telling us unpleasant truths!—think of their happiness if we could refrain from enlightening them as to their dress or manners or beliefs.

Indeed, if Love will stop its suicidal habit of criticism, it will quarrel so seldom that it will be as hopeful on this subject as the Optimist herself, and it will declare, of Love and Quarrelling, that, like Mrs. 'Arris, there ain't no such thing!

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THE story of Rosamond and her purple jar which fed the minds of youth in the early part of the last century had a very immoral moral attached to it—namely, that the useful was more needful than the beautiful. Rosamond, it will be remembered, deeply desired a certain purple jar; she also needed a new pair of shoes. Her mother, who was an insufferably wise and prudent person, laid before her little seven-year-old girl the whole situation: something fine to look at *versus* something comfortable to wear; something to gratify the eye or something to meet the needs of the body;

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the useful or the beautiful. "Oh, mother, oh!" Rosamond had cried out! "Look! look! Blue, green, red, yellow, and purple! Oh, mother, what beautiful things! Won't you buy some of these?" And the mother replied with cold reasonableness, "Of what use would they be to me, Rosamond?"

Poor little Rosamond, hunting for a use, suggests that flowers might be put into these beautiful red and yellow things; and then the passion of art speaks with pathetic simplicity: "They would look so pretty on the chimney-piece." It is then that the mother calmly presents the situation. . . . Rosamond, with a spiritual instinct which was soon to be extinguished, quickly chose the purple jar, joyously indifferent to tattered shoes. The remarks of her mother, the great discomfort of pebbles in her little shoes, combined with the mean advantage taken by the author in making the jar a fraud in the fleeting

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nature of the gorgeous purple dye, soon brought poor Rosamond down to the materialistic level of this most utilitarian of Miss Edgeworth's households. Of course, the moral shines forth distinctly: *The necessities of life are not spiritual, but material.*

That this is immoral, everybody will agree. The statement that the body shall be nourished at the expense of the soul, at the cost of emotional experiences, at the price of that love of beauty and sense of fitness which express themselves in art, this statement is, of course, wicked. Such nourishment starves the spirit, though the body may wax fat upon it, and the individual prosper in every material way. Nor is he necessarily any the worse ethically, for character, squeezed by pure reason into hard-and-fast rules of conduct, becomes a reliable and useful commodity in social life; a staple that never fluctuates in gusts of

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emotion, but can always be depended upon. Yet where there has been any love of beauty the artistic sense suffers its own agonies of starvation — until its death ends its pain. By-and-by Rosamond got over crying out with joy at the sight of color, just because it was beautiful; she was able to choose a needle-book, instead of a painted stone plum, and even to congratulate herself upon her own good sense:

“I am glad I chose the red leather needle-book that has been so useful to me, instead of the stone plum that would have been no use to me.”

The enormity of a stone painted to look like a plum did not, of course, weigh with Miss Edgeworth; she merely presented use *versus* what she called beauty; and Rosamond learned the lesson. But the little girl did not reach such utilitarian heights without pain. Those of us who know her woes by heart read into the

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small, ugly countenance of the wood-cuts a certain pathos; the pathos of the round peg in the square hole. Miss Edgeworth's moral pen quickly whittled the poor peg into shape; and when at the end of the book we left her, Rosamond's desire for beauty was thoroughly eradicated, her æsthetic sense quite atrophied, her appreciation of utility grown to monstrous proportions. As a result, her little, impulsive soul, full of the divine irrationality of feeling which had needed only the balance of life's necessities, had become priggish and sterile, all its imaginative promptings stultified by pure reason and an entirely intellectual, unemotional sense of duty.

Of course, this was all very bad; we know it so well that no one takes the trouble to say so. Yet somehow or other the pendulum does seem to have swung very far the other way! That hard ugliness had in it a certain *fibre*

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that we, in our lovelier living, come perilously near missing. It almost seems as if nowadays the feeling for beauty had brought about a sensuality of the mind that has softened and crumbled the fundamental granite of human experience (which is only another word for utilitarianism), until we have merely a mush of emotions which we call the artistic sense.

The demand of the American people is, just now, for decoration; but, as Beauty has no ultimate and absolute standard, decoration is, of course, a matter of personal judgment. And what personal judgment can do, we all know too well! Purple jars (of insincerest dyes!) abound; we are swamped with them. With imitation plums, with rolling-pins covered with plush and studded with brass hooks, with painted snow-shovels. We have "picture throws," too—monstrosities so far removed from the ordinary walks of life that they should perhaps be de-

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scribed in detail: eggs, blown, then gilded, and, separated by a blue or red glass bead, strung upon a cord of chenille; when twenty or twenty-five eggs have been "treated" in this way, the whole appalling collection is "thrown" over the upper corner of a picture, and hangs there to collect dust and debauch the æsthetic sense of the family.

Of course, these are extreme and horrible illustrations of the untrained artistic sense. Yet even in refined households it would seem that the rebound from the utilitarianism of Rosamond's unpleasant mother, to the demand for something to please the eye, has gone too far, and that we need some slight return to austerer standards.

Quite apart from the principle involved in Miss Edgeworth's complacent worship of the useful, the emptiness of the house in which Rosamond lived is as delightful as a fresh wind and silence—at least when

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we approach it from the clutter and over-adornment of our own dwellings; from our "purple jars," our tottering tables of useless and too often meaningless silver, our crowded, billowing cushions, our floating hangings, our preposterous omelette of Japanese rooms, Dutch corners, and Mooresque nooks!

Rosamond's house, as it is pictured in that little fat volume of our youth, is plain to the point of bareness. In the drawing-room we behold a mantel-shelf, a single picture (hanging very near the ceiling), a table, a chair, a footstool; and a female, Rosamond's mother, as wooden as the rest of the furnishings! This room is bare, but it is not hideous. In its way, it has the refinement of a Japanese dwelling, clean, restful, simple. Contrasted with certain drawing-rooms which one encounters in one's way about the world, it seems a haven of rest. It is useful, merely; but how refreshing would mere use-

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fulness be in rooms filled to overflowing with bric-à-brac, which too often tries to combine use with beauty, to the absolute extinction of both. When people of some degree of intelligence choose to use as a match-case a gilded wooden shoe, adorned with pink satin bows, it is time to turn to Rosamond's mother: "Why tie ribbons," she would say, "to a receptacle for lamp-lighters? Why gild an article made to be worn in the mud? Why place a shoe, whose place is in the closet or on the foot, on the mantel-shelf? What," this reasonable female would demand, "is the use of such a thing?"

What, indeed! The matches catch in the ribbons, the gilt flecks off at a touch, and the labor of the household is made just so much more complicated by the necessary dusting of this senseless thing.

The fact is, the gilded shoe is but a symbol of that tyranny of Things which the

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over-elaboration of living, so characteristic of our day and generation, has brought about. We have all of us felt it in one way or another; perhaps most obviously in æsthetics. But thoughtful persons recognize their own (or their neighbor's) slavery to Things, in social life, in education, and even in emotion.

In social life, the gilded shoes are meaningless details — details which, for want of a better term, are called "duties." Now there are certain conventions of living, certain sweet refinements and noble courtesies, which create elegance and distinction, and do unquestionably make for the truest civilization. No one can question the value of such conventions, because at bottom they are grounded on spiritual necessities, on deep human appreciations. They are not *Things*, because they have souls; but when such decent and dignified conventions are overloaded with pink ribbons and cheap

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gilding—to return to the metaphor of the shoe—the spirit goes out of them. When the human instinct of courteous fellowship degenerates into the enforced and hated round of calls, full of tired chatter or else sighs of relief in finding people “not at home,” the pink ribbons are beginning! When hospitality, which may entertain angels unawares, drops into a mathematical give and take, the chains of slavery can be heard rattling under the table.

In intellectual life it is just the same. The sound thoroughness of real scholarship is embroidered over and over with futile accomplishments; a little of a great many things is too often the educational standard; decoration where it does not belong, elaboration of the useless, so that the sternness of true study is hidden and stifled and by-and-by extinguished.

The great emotional experiences of life are belittled by the same insistence

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upon the trivial: Life and Love look into each other's eyes; a man and woman elect each other from all the world. But the joyful solemnity of marriage is ruffled by the details of the wedding, perhaps by family squabbles over flowers and gowns and invitations! Or Great Death comes in at the door, and the little human soul, overwhelmed with grief, appalled by the sudden opening of Eternity before its eyes—yet fusses (there is no other word for it) over “mourning,” over the width of the hem on the veil or the question of crêpe buttons or dull jet! This may be shocking or mournful or ludicrous, as one happens to look at it; but it is certainly uncivilized.

Perhaps even our religious life is not free from this tyranny; crowds of superficial emotions riot hysterically in some forms of worship, so that the bed-rock of conduct on which emotion ought to rest crumbles little by little away; plain

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duties go by the board, and gilding and pink ribbons take their place.

There are a few people who long for freedom from the unnecessary in society and education and religion; but there are many more who are awakening to our more obvious slavery in æsthetics. One says "our"—because the slavery does not belong only in the class which is digging its way out of barbarism with a painted snow-shovel. The slavery begins, to be sure, at this lowest point of artistic development, but it runs up to the level of the most cultivated appreciation of what is beautiful. At this level it shows itself in *accumulation*; and how well we know the results! More Things: more servants, more expense, more anxieties; less time, less silence, less space!

In the Shovel and Picture Throw Class, Things do not involve extra service, because this class has, generally, a limited income, hence the work caused by—let

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us say—the shovel, does not imply additional household labor which must be paid for; the owner does her own dusting. But time is stolen and space is used and thought is squandered. There is, furthermore, the initial expenditure for the shovel itself.

This comes home to us all with discouraging force when we see the crowd of women at Christmas-time who make the day of Christ's birth a date for the exchange and accumulation of trash. The women who battle their way through the department stores, while hard-earned and hard-saved money trickles out of thin, tightly grasped purses, for—nameless things! Celluloid and plush and gilt; cheap, flimsy, without dignity and without significance; neither useful to the body nor nourishing to the soul. Put such things beside a single rose, exquisite for its little moment, gone when its work of cheer and fragrance is done!—and the

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poor slave to Things groans under the consciousness of money spent for that which is not bread, and labor given for that which satisfieth not.

The vice of Accumulation, however, does not reach its fullest expression among the uncultivated poor—the Shovel Class; and for reasons that are obvious. It shows its rank and poisonous growth in households where a refined taste repudiates the celluloid whisk-broom case and the plush picture - frame. To be personal: Can we not all of us recall articles packed away on the upper shelves of our spare-room closets?—vases, casts, plaques, lamps; packed away, not because they are ugly, but because we have so many new things that we must dispose of old things to make room for them. What would Rosamond's mother say to two purple jars? Yet some of us exhausted housekeepers could easily (and gladly) bestow twenty upon her!

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Of course, accumulation, *per se*, is silly—but it is more than that; it is a burden and an anxiety. In the class that has outgrown the Shovel it complicates domestic affairs, it raises the question of household labor with its harrowing difficulties between employer and employed. “Oh, for the days when I had one girl, and dusted my own parlor!” cried a woman whose great establishment took her time and nerves and morals. Desire for the one-girl period was probably an exaggeration, but her principle was sound and civilized. Indeed, a limited civilization betrays itself in this overfeeding of the artistic instinct, just as limited breeding betrays itself in overfeeding of the body. And when we once fully realize this, we shall no doubt rise up and fight for freedom. But we shall not secure it without pain. The slave must break his chains, and he cannot do so without effort.

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Yet it has been done.

The first impulse of those who would become civilized is to rid themselves of Things; and they hasten the hour of freedom by presenting their unholy possessions to less enlightened households:—a cheap vase to a sewing-woman; a gilded broiler, tied with blue ribbons and used as paper-rack, to some innocent dependant. But this is profoundly selfish and irresponsible. It does, indeed, purge the original owner of the horror, but it only passes it along to afflict humanity. There is but one sure road to freedom—*destruction of Things*.

A fire in the back-yard, fed with wooden shoes, can be relied upon. Purple jars, not being combustible, might be drowned in the depths of the sea; brass dragons with curly tails, called candlesticks, awkward to hold, with no human touch of imagination or handicraft about them, neither useful nor beautiful, might

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be disposed of to the junk-man; plush things without a name demand the ash-barrel, for they do not burn well; the vital purity of fire repudiates them! Tidies are prehistoric; but if any survive, the ash-barrel is also their true home.

On the whole, fire is our most efficient helper. A "holy fire," some one called it once—a fire of sacrifice and aspiration and worship! Rosamond's austere and unlovely mother would no doubt ultimately banish the unnecessary, the futile, and the useless by forbidding their purchase; but immediately afterwards it would be necessary to banish Rosamond's mother. Fire, however, vanishes with its purifying work and leaves Beauty, bare and clear and entirely true, to take its majestic place in human life. . . . With what a sense of freedom we would all breathe if we were saved as by fire!

Think of our cluttered houses, swept

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clean of a thousand Things—things beautiful, perhaps, in themselves (we are not considering the snow - shovel), but so numerous that they cannot present a single clear impression; think of our floors, bare of multitudinous rugs; of our sideboards, freed from innumerable pieces of unused silver, upon which our servants spend their grudging labor; of our walls, stripped of dozens of pictures to leave space for the two or three with which we want to live. Think of days empty of trivialities—days free from long-drawn committee meetings where nothing is accomplished, from tiresome lectures, from weary calling, from the frippery of ceremony—days spacious and silent, open to nature and art and humanness! Think of the great, simple, divine human experiences, of Love and Death, unspotted by trivialities; think even of worship stripped of little, foolish, unmanly, and unwomanly trimmings and details, and left to its own

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unspeakable dignity, stirred through and through by the great pulse of Conduct!

This ideal of freedom from the tyranny of Things may be very far from realization, but there is reason to hope that down underneath the dreary weight of our foolish possessions it is slowly evolving.

And every one of us poor slaves who lights a match to burn household trash lights a torch to illumine the path on which Truth and Beauty and Freedom shall come into their kingdom!

CONCERNING CHURCH-GOING

IT is not so very long ago that church-going and character were synonymous; not that everybody who went to church was good, but everybody who was good went to church. Only the scoffer and the very black sheep stayed away. To say of a man that he was not a church-goer was equivalent to saying that he was to be looked upon with suspicion, or, at any rate, with grave disapproval. Christian people, in those days, had clear and simple judgment in such matters. Salvation, they said, depended upon the knowledge of God, and knowledge of God depended upon the Church. The

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logical deduction from the premise was that everybody ought to go to church.

One looks back upon the simple and uncomplicated frame of mind which could make such a statement almost with envy. It belonged to a period of definite ethical outlines and plain, elemental laws; to a time when people said "this is right"; "that is wrong"; when, for instance, with clean-cut certainty they declared that cards were the devil's prayer book; and added that if one used the devil's litany one was in a fair way to go to the devil, for ever and ever. But how differently we put such things to ourselves, we complex sinners of 1904! We hesitate to pronounce anything entirely good or entirely bad. We, for example, know the relation of recreation to character, and believe in the card-table accordingly; yet we have an uneasy consciousness of the devil in relation to Bridge. Our fathers, or certainly our grandfathers, had no

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such uneasiness in any question of ethics. They saw things simply—right or wrong, black or white. We, unsimple folk, are bewildered by a multitude of shades of gray.

And there are so many of these gray questions! Dingy white some of them are, or plaid, or check; there are apparently very few unmistakably black ones, on which we can come out with a whole-souled reference to the devil and all his works! And this question of the duty of going to church is one of the gray ones.

There are, of course, a multitude of foolish and conceited things said by people who do not go to church. "The Church has done its work," these people say, carelessly; "its day is over; it is obsolete; it is a remnant of the dark ages and the childhood of the race." Such statements are so obviously absurd that they do not give us much concern; but they do make clear to us that the time has passed when

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church-going was the highest expression of the moral life of the community, and hence a matter of course with respectable people.

Going to church has ceased to be a matter of course.

It has become a matter of effort, on the part of the pastor, to "get people to come," as the phrase is; a matter of reluctant duty on the part of some of the people who do come; and no matter at all to the people who stay away!

Yet, in spite of the effort in the pulpit, in spite of the sense of duty in the pews, a comparison of church attendance to-day with that of thirty or forty years ago presents an astonishing difference. The scattered congregation seems to be made up of two classes: old, anxious, conservative souls, who scold the empty pews; young, rebellious, careless souls, who come because parental authority requires it, but who promise themselves

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freedom at the earliest possible moment. And between these two classes, which sprinkle themselves over the half-empty church, there is a great gulf fixed—a gulf of misunderstanding and lack of sympathy. The older people are bitter and hark back to some elemental law of their youth as to the “duty” of going to church. The younger people are contemptuous and declare that they are a law unto themselves. . . . But where are the people who are missed? (We are not just now asking about the people who do not go to church anyhow or anywhere—the reckless, selfish, dissolute people; such persons from the beginning have been non-church-goers, and so do not come into the present puzzle.) But where are the people who, a generation ago, would have been as regular in their attendance at church as their pastor himself? The people who are neither young nor old, bitter nor contemptuous, con-

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servative nor impatient? Where are they, these people of intelligence and conscientiousness, of upright life, of responsibility, or even of mere harmless, pleasant living?

They can be found easily enough. They are reading their papers on Sunday morning, or writing letters, or playing golf, or perhaps lying in their beds half asleep over a novel; they are studying, they are deep in some professional work, they are doing anything and everything — except going to church. In the churches on Sunday morning the preachers upbraid them; the old-fashioned folk reprobate them for their bad example; and the young people envy them.

What does it all mean, this golf-playing, novel - reading, letter - writing state of things? How may it be met? Where is the law that can be applied to it, which will define our duty—a primitive, simple

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law, obedience to which will set everything right?

In regard to the young people, some of us think that the law is obvious enough. Church-going, we say, may have become a matter of personal opinion and choice among adults. But no opinion can be of much value which is not based upon experience; hence, before the children begin to make experiences for themselves, before they can possibly be able to have an opinion and make a choice about church-going, they ought to be educated in ways which human experience in all the generations has proved to be helpful to the spiritual life.

So, those of us who find the bread of life in the church must certainly take the children there. This is the elemental and simple law in regard to youth, just as elemental and simple as that which justifies the father and mother in providing food for the baby's body which their own expe-

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rience declares is sound and nourishing. The baby's preferences are not asked!

But in regard to grown people, a law as to any especial food for body or soul is hard to discover.

If we found, for instance, that decadence in church-going meant decadence in character, we might feel that, at least, we were on the way to such a law. But it does not mean a decadence in character. Some of these people who do not go to church are not bad people. On the contrary, we admit (if we are candid) that among those that stay away to play golf or write letters, or even to read novels, are some of the noblest and best men and women that we know. We have to acknowledge that the man who has made the most superb fight for civic righteousness is a non-church-goer. We have to grant that the woman whose purse and heart are at the service of poor, bad, broken humanity spends her Sunday

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morning in her garden. Yes, they are good; it is their goodness that makes them so perplexing. In fact, our young people, longing for ~~tennis~~ on Sunday mornings, do not hesitate to point out to us, with the candor peculiar to their engaging generation, that some of these non-church-goers are of very much more value to the community than are certain folk whom (possibly) respect forbids them to name. We have to admit that some of these non-church-goers practise Christian virtues in a way that puts the Christian church-goer to shame; they force upon us the conclusion that attendance at church is not a necessity, but an adjunct to character. When this comes home to us we find no elemental and primitive repartee about the devil to fall back upon. We have to face the complexity of the situation by asking ourselves certain questions:

First—Why do we go to church?

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Secondly—What do we mean by “church”?

As for why we go, there may be many different reasons; but there are two which are common to us all: we go for instruction, and we go for worship.

In the matter of receiving instruction, there is a marked difference between the older and the younger generation. In these days doctrinal instruction is not desired by the large mass of people who might be church-goers. Indeed, indifference to such teaching is part of that strange change of standards which just now is so perplexing, and, indeed, so sobering. Yet, if we will look deeply enough into this antipathy to instruction in matters of personal belief, we will find that it is not all discouraging, because it has its root in the *ideal of personal liberty*. See what this ideal means in the matter of instruction in relation to church-going:

We are willing to have our ministers

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say to us, "Do your duty," but we are not willing to have them tell us what our duty is; that we will decide for ourselves! In other words, the ideal of personal liberty demands that each individual receive his God for himself; each individual evolve his own ideal of righteousness. Never any more may authority stand for truth! Never any more can the human creature take his spiritual law second or third hand. The Soul and God are standing face to face.

That is what it all means, this clash and clamor, this outbreak of individualism, with its foolishness and obstinacy and conceit; these, we dare to believe, are the unlovely and terrifying accompaniments of a divine process of evolution, which has for its end a personal relation with God. The human Soul is breaking out of the mould of custom—that mould so necessary in all beginnings;—to face its Maker. "*Son of Man*," cries the

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awful Voice, "*stand upon thy feet!*" And the little, naked soul, stripped of the swaddling-bands of custom and authority, stands up, whimpering and stumbling and blundering (oh, such blundering!) in the overwhelming light; yet claiming, somehow, a new and solemn and entirely personal relationship with God.

But part of this process of evolution seems to be the rejection of instruction from the Church, as an institution. The moment we realize the spirit of the age in this demand for an entirely individual revelation of spiritual law to the soul, a demand that is not made with flippancy or conceit, but with sober sincerity, we find one reason for a definite statement that "everybody ought to go to church" withdrawn. We can no longer say it is a duty to go "because we shall be taught what to believe"; because we know that we shall believe not what we

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ought, but what we must; or else lose our intellectual integrity.

There remains, then, the other reason for going to church—*worship*. And that brings one at once to the other question—“What is meant by church?”

Do we mean the four walls wherein human creatures gather to worship the Eternal — those four sacred and venerable walls which for generations have been to other human creatures the House of God, the very Gate of Heaven? Certainly we cannot feel that worship is dependent upon these four walls. No reverent or sensitive mind can contemplate the august temples, even of the pagan past, without spiritual emotion; but, equally, no reverent mind can deny the worship of the Eternal far outside the walls of any church. Does not McAndrew worship in the engine-room of his steamer? “I cannot,” he says—

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"I cannot get my sleep to-night; old bones are
hard to please;
I'll stand the middle watch up here—alone
wi' God, an' these
My engines, after ninety days o' race an' rack
an' strain
Through all the seas of all Thy world, slam-
bangin' home again."

Alone with God and his engines! Here is worship which does not need the four walls, although when he is ashore, no doubt, McAndrew combines the worship and the walls.

Yes, although human experience has proved to us that the assembling of ourselves together, to unite in some outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual aspiration, is helpful to many souls, and contributes to that growth in grace which is man's chief end, and which we may believe does indeed glorify God, yet we know that the blessed company of all faithful people has never limited itself to four walls. For encouragement and joy,

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and help in living, we may meet together in what we call a church, and unite in what we call worship; but such meeting together is only a means, not an end. The end is the fullest, deepest, richest relation of the individual soul to its God. And as soon as we realize this we must admit that though we go to church to worship, some may worship without going to church.

“The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the
hills, the plains,
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him
who reigns?
Speak to Him, then, for He hears, and Spirit
with Spirit can meet;
Closer is He than breathing, nearer than
hands or feet.”

Such speech is worship. But when we grant that, another reason for declaring that “everybody ought to go to church” is withdrawn.

So the matter of going to church comes

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down to a personal choice as to what is best for each soul, and the question "Ought I to go to church?" changes its form: "Shall I—who may hope, humbly and reverently, that I belong to that blessed company of all faithful people, that company which is made up of every man and woman belonging to any church or to no church, every human creature who tries to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly before the Lord his God—shall I, belonging to this company, get help and courage and consecration for daily life, shall I lift up my heart unto the Lord best, by going to church every Sunday? If so, I go! Or shall I, perhaps, get such courage for living, best, by looking in silence up into the sky from under some leafy shelter on a Sunday morning? Can I lift up my heart with greater fervor among my fellows in a church, or do I worship more deeply in the solitude of books, or in the service

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of humanity, or, possibly, in mere luxurious, well-earned physical rest?

Does all this put church-going down on the basis of individual expediency: *What is best for my soul?*

But is there any other basis of conduct? Is not expediency, in its noblest sense, that elemental law of life, both material and spiritual, of which we feel the need in all these gray questions which confront us? Expediency was the basis of that primitive expression of the difference between right and wrong—"Be good or be damned." It is the highest suggestion of spirituality in, "This is eternal life — that ye shall know the Father." One saying seems to us ignoble, and the other divine, yet both grow out of this despised word *expediency*—the recognition of what is best. When the soul recognizes its own best, the "ought" can be answered easily enough; it cannot lay down a rule for

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other people, but it reaches an elemental law for itself.

How complicated, beside this law, are the arguments that are urged upon people as to the "duty" of going to church! One is, that people ought to go to church to set a good example.

Here we come upon a strange survival of fetishism—the suggestion that church-going, *per se*, is of moral significance; such fetishism must lead to a very subtle spiritual hypocrisy, because it advocates the letter, whether the spirit be there or no. And certainly it is a question whether insincerity is ever a good example.

Again: People should go to church because it encourages the minister.

But would the minister be encouraged by the presence of a congregation gathered to encourage him? Such "encouragement" is false spiritual economics, and the true priest is the first to tell us

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so. For there is one thing we must face, that the only excuse for supply is demand.

And, again: We ought to go to church to make church-going the habit of our lives. For, it is added, artlessly, a course of conduct which becomes a habit cannot be easily broken.

True; but those of us who have seen emotion — divine, delicate, the breathing of the Eternal within us—those who have seen such emotion harden into a meaningless formula will not dare to advocate the habit of the expression of emotion.

And still another reason: We ought to go to church to keep holy the Sabbath day.

Here we trespass at once upon personality. For each soul of us must decide what is holiness to us; and no man can decide what is holiness for any other man.

But one need not rehearse the multi-

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tude of reasons why people "ought" to go to church; instead is it not easier and simpler and truer to fall back upon the old divine and human law of expediency? A law that seems to hold all the little reasons in its own great reasonableness; a law which makes for the preservation of the Church—for, by individual obedience to it, the Church must survive as long as human beings need it! . . . If we obey this law, we will trust a little more. We shall trust the purpose of the Eternal; we shall trust the individual soul; we shall so trust in the divine principle which has created the Church that we shall be able to believe in the continuance of the principle without the Church;—in other words, we shall believe in the *permanence of the soul's relation to God!*

In trusting the principle of the Church, even to the point of contemplating the ending of the Church as an institution, we only trust the sunrise to fade into high

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and splendid noon. And trusting, we wait; without dogmatism, only with hope. We look at the solemn verdict of human experience that the Church is necessary; and we look also at the demand of the individual for personal experience and judgment; and we wait—

“my faith is large in Time,
And that which shapes it to some perfect end.”

ACQUAINTANCE WITH GRIEF

SOMETIMES the price seems very high. . . . Probably most of us who have reached middle age have had moments when we have said to ourselves that the price was very high. We admit that we have danced, and the dancing was all that our hearts could wish; and yet when the dance was over, and we stood, flushed and panting, the blood still leaping to the music, we have drawn back at the sight of the Piper demanding his pay, and said, "Oh, it is very high, the price!"

Yes, it is high; but the dancers, from whom for a period or for all time Middle

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Age may have withdrawn itself, the dancers see this same poor Middle Age fumbling about for some coin to offer to the inexorable Piper, and go on dancing, making no provision for the moment when they, too, will be asked to pay the price of the dance, for Youth does not understand this matter of payment. It has been told that there is a price for everything, and that when one dances one pays the Piper; and perhaps it believes the statement, as it believes many other statements which stupid and experienced Age is forever dinning into its ears. But it is hard for Youth to realize what payment means; to realize the account that will be presented—the long account of silent years, of fierce regret, of eating remorse, and of bleak living, empty of music.

So Youth goes on dancing; while some of those who have paid the price stand by, watching the pleasant whirl and try-

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ing to make themselves heard: "Do be more prudent," these poor folk say; "do lay up treasure against the inevitable day of payment, so that you may not stand outside the glow, shivering, as we shiver now, in poverty." But their voices are hardly heard in the cheerful din! It is when they stand thus, shivering, trying to caution their fellows, that some of them say to themselves, "The price was very high!" If they have really entered into the passion of the music, if they have really lived, they are able to add, "but it was not too high! It is better to have had Love and happiness, and then pain, than no pain and no Love. If only I did not have to remember the waste of the days when I was rich!"

It is against this waste that one would caution the dancers, the happy people, if they will but stop to hear!—not against the music and the glory, not against the fulness of living, but just against waste.

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For it is waste which afterwards makes the price seem so high.

There are two kinds of waste of happiness: one is the waste which comes from *unconsciousness of the possession of happiness*; the other, the waste which comes from *indifference to opportunity*.

The waste of unconsciousness is the most frequent; and it makes the dancers just a little less happy than they ought to be while they are dancing. The waste from indifference to opportunity makes them infinitely more unhappy after the dancing is over.

As for unconsciousness of happiness, just look at the happy people who are unaware of their own wealth! It is a matter of course to be happy; and with astounding prodigality they squander the essentials of life;—the three things which make up their entire capital, the three things upon which human living rests:

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The consciousness of human love.

The consciousness of human character.

The consciousness of human courage.

These three things are absolutely necessary to life, and most people possess them; yet very few trouble themselves to count their wealth. We are all too busy with trivialities. We get up in the morning, we rich people, and our first thought is not of the love that surrounds us, not of the goodness of the world, not of the bravery of humanity, but of some ridiculous worry, some petty annoyance. It is as if one held up one's hand before one's eyes so that one could not see the sun. Of course, the sun is there; but the hand hides it. We wake up with a sigh of remembrance that the front door needs painting, and with never a thought of the dear feet that will cross its threshold just as joyfully whether it is painted or not. We accept Love with the same complacent unconsciousness that we ac-

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cept air; but without it we should die. Human character, too, the goodness of our dear people, we take as a matter of course, but without belief in it we would wish to die. The courage of the world, the serene ability to endure, is an absolute commonplace to us; but without the knowledge of it we should not dare to live or die.

The waste which there is in happy folks' unconsciousness of these three essentials seems very astonishing to those who no longer possess them. "She has her husband and children; and they are well, and they are good, and they are contented; and yet she was actually unhappy because — *her dressmaker disappointed her!*" says some poor soul who has paid the price — a woman whose house is left unto her desolate. To such a one the whimpering and scolding complaint about the unimportant seems an incredible folly, and she is moved to say

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to her complaining rich friend, "Do stop and remember that you are rich; remember all you possess!" But instead of remembering her wealth, the foolish woman is bewailing her poverty; she is consumed with worry over unimportant things. The dressmaker brings tears to her eyes; the domestic problem keeps her awake at night; an invitation which does not come turns the world black before her.

Shame! says the poor creature whose sense of proportion has been born in some bitter hour of fear or bereavement or wrong-doing.

And it is a shame—a shame for people who have in their lives the consciousness of Love and Character and Courage, to fall into the wasteful folly of unhappiness about the unimportant. It would be bad enough if this shameful kind of unhappiness could be confined to the person who experiences it; but, unfortu-

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nately, its black edge spreads over on to other lives. No woman who comes down to her breakfast-table with what her son frankly calls a "grouch on" is grouchy to herself alone. Her husband feels it; that same candid son feels it; her servants feel it; and so the day falls a little more darkly than it need on this dear, troubled, beautiful world.

It is certainly very curious how rarely we stop to reflect upon the duty of being conscious of our happiness, of being pleasant, in fact, for the sake of other people's happiness. And it is so simple a duty, too, always at our hand! It does not need that we shall go out and look for it, as we might look for a high deed to do—a dragon to slay, a movement to reform the world, a vocation, a martyrdom. Sometimes we have to hunt for such things; while right at hand is this great and simple and serious opportunity: the opportunity of being pleasant.

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Perhaps just pleasantness has not a very heroic sound; but the human heart, that, knowing its own bitterness, can yet carry itself cheerfully, is not without heroism. Indeed, if that human heart does no more than hold its tongue about its own aches and pains, it has a certain moral value that the world cannot afford to lose. "Pleasantness" does not sound as well as self-sacrifice or wisdom or spirituality; but it may include all these great words. And certainly just to start one's husband out to his work cheerily; to make the hobbledehoy of a son feel a gentler and sweeter sentiment towards women because of his own mother's sound, sweet gayety and strength; to help one's servants to put good-humor and friendliness into their service — these things make for righteousness in the world. And a sense of proportion as to what is worth worrying about—in other words, a consciousness of one's own wealth—will bring

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these things about to a wonderful degree. But to get this sense of proportion, one must deliberately take account of stock.

Just how rich am I?

It is astonishing what a good, healthy shame is developed by such an inventory! Take some sleepless night, when all the annoyances of the day buzz over and over in the tired brain—the stair-carpet that is beginning to show signs of wear; the cook's evident dissatisfaction; the criticism that one's husband's mother made on the children's manners, and — well, yes; the children's manners, which certainly *are* bad!—when over and over these miserable things prick the tired mind, make out the inventory.

Count your blessings.

The idea brings instantly a shock of interest to the complaining soul. Where shall one begin? What is the most important blessing? Probably most of us

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would put love first; but, once started, the blessings press for recognition and the pleasant list lengthens. The buzz of front-stair carpets, and cooks, and even one's mother-in-law's truthful remarks, dies down, sinks quite out of sight in the quiet, sleepless dark. The blessing of human love—for they do love her, the busy, undemonstrative husband, the noisy children, and even the critical and conscientious mother-in-law. The blessing of human character—for they are good: the husband, absorbed and perhaps harassed by business, is good, bless his heart! dear, hard-working, honest fellow! and the children have no real naughtiness in them, so the manners can be mended. The blessing of human courage—who cares if the carpet has holes in it? who, in this brave world of life and death and joy and sorrow, cares for a thing like a hole in the carpet? Would one think of it if that hard-working hus-

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band were sick? Would one see it if the eldest boy were a bad fellow, instead of a bad-mannered fellow? Of course not! *Love, character, courage.* The great blessings. . . . As for the little ones—the garden, and a pretty house to live in, and a good complexion (be honest and count even the pleasant, harmless vanities);—but one can't count them all! One goes to sleep long before the list is ended. Well-being, alone, does not make happiness; there must be the consciousness of well-being; and this deliberate valuation of daily life awakes the consciousness of well-being until it glows like a torch in a dark place. The people who have this consciousness are not wasteful. They let no golden moment slip unrecognized into Eternity, no moment on which, in the lean years, they will look back with amazement at their own extravagance of unconsciousness. They know how rich they are, and they are grateful. . . .

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The other kind of waste that comes home to us when Love pays the price of Loving is the waste of opportunity.

The consciousness of this waste is so cruel a pain that those who have felt it wince at the very thought of it. The Piper, pressing for payment, says, "Give me your blessed memories of kind deeds done for Love's sake; of tender words spoken; of joyous sacrifice of self." And lo, the poor spendthrift, whose opportunities of tenderness and sacrifice and service slipped unheeded through his fingers in the happy days of possession, stands bankrupt, and says, "But, oh, I have so few such memories! Why was I not kinder when I had a chance?"

The human heart that knows this black poverty longs to caution the dancers against their waste of opportunity. "Remember," it says to the happy folk, rich yet in unspent opportunities, "oh, *do* remember to be kind; because, some day,

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you will be sorry if you have to remember that you were unkind—or even to remember that you missed a chance to be kind.” That last is, perhaps, the most frequent experience. Most of us are not guilty of any overt act; we do not (let us say) do positively unkind things; we are not cruel or brutal, we are simply negative. We are not cruel—but neither are we tender; we are not brutal—but neither are we instant with service and sympathy; we do not say unkind things—but how niggardly we are with praise!

The looking back on such wasted opportunities may become an almost unendurable pain. . . .

“How doth Death speak of our Beloved?
It sweeps their failings out of sight;
It shows our faults like fires at night.”

And how those fires of memory consumed our happiness! What about the

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old people, to whose concerns and interests we were so cheerfully indifferent? What would not some of us give now to be able to give them some pleasure?—to tell them of our admiration and love (which, of course, we felt when they were here, but which, curiously enough, we so rarely thought of mentioning to them). Yet old people like appreciation quite as much as young people; in fact, a little more, for whereas Youth is supremely contented with itself, Age has its own sad self-knowledge of small desert; and praise or appreciation may be a balm to old wounds of regret and shame. We might have been more generous in praise; we might have been more appreciative; we might have been more patient; we might, even, in our whirl of busy living, have been a little more interested in their interests; we might have given them, in some pause in our happy affairs, more opportunity to talk about their affairs.

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We might, oh, we might have gone to see them oftener. . . .

Oh, Piper, when you demand of us memories of such duties done, of opportunities taken, we stand bankrupt and shivering before you!

This, then, is the other caution that one would whisper in the dancers' ears: *Take every chance you can possibly get to be kind*; because, some day, there may be no more chances.

But just kindness seems such a small and unimportant thing! If we were bidden to die for the people we love, how gladly we would offer up our lives—it would be part of the dance. But we are not asked to die for them, only to live for them; only to do the hundred small things that every day offers us; only to be ready with truth and courage and tenderness and service.

There can be no doubt — any one who has stood by an open grave will say so—

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there can be no possible doubt, that only memories of opportunities embraced, of duties done, or, rather, of privileges accepted, only such memories will comfort us when the price is paid. To have to look back upon quarrelling or selfishness, or even upon the more negative pain of mere leaving undone that which we might have done, is enough to poison life. No wonder that those who are acquainted with Grief cry out to us, "Oh, be kind, be kind, be kind!"

Not that kindness is going to save us from pain—the measure of Love must forever be regret. Those that love most regret most, for the ideal must always be unattainable. If Love were ever quite satisfied, it would mean that its ideal was but a poor, stunted thing. No; even the Love that has been most eager to avail itself of its opportunities will regret, and must regret, but not with the poisonous consciousness of waste! And such

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Love will at least have so many blessed memories that it will not be left bankrupt when the day of payment comes.

But what of those of us who are bankrupt now? Is there any comfort for us? Yes, there remains to us, while we live, the chance to profit by our acquaintance with Grief: Did we waste such and such opportunities? Did we lose the chance to be what we might have been to one beloved? There yet remain others! The consciousness of the lost opportunity may be a spur, harrying us, to be sure, tearing us, it may be, yet driving us into the blessed consciousness of our wealth. Then we shall stop wasting it, and begin to spend it nobly on the opportunities that are standing so close about us—the opportunity to be kind, to be just, to be patient, and, again, to be *kind*.

If it does so stir us — this regret and remorse that breaks our hearts, at night, alone, in the dark—if it does so stim-

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ulate us, our Dead have not died in vain!

Let us take, then, from their sacred hands the pain of regret of an unreach-
ed ideal; and with that pain a new and
deep impulse to live and love and serve;
and let us call this impulse, thankfully,
another gift from the beloved, the last,
and perhaps the best gift that they have
given us—our dear Dead!—the gift of a
serious consciousness of the richness and
the purpose of life.

CONCERNING GLASS HOUSES

IT is only the people who live in glass houses who are forbidden to throw stones.

All the rest of us can practise this favorite pastime of humanity with absolute freedom. And it is wonderful how proficient we become—especially we women. In early life it is said that boys can throw stones better than girls; but when both reach maturity, it is quite different.

“The nasty things you women say about one another!” a man declares, with a gasp of admiring astonishment. “Men are not in it with you!”

And his humility is justified by the

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facts; we are far more skilful than he is. When a man gossips he generally (not always) picks up a good, big cobblestone, and sends it, vigorously and openly, spinning through the air to its goal of crashing destruction. A woman, on the contrary, is apt to use small, smooth, flat pebbles that "skip," which, after the glass has been broken, are not so easily found and brought back to her with the glazier's bill; and therein, in slyness and irresponsibility, she shows herself the superior of the male creature.

It is the purpose of this paper to maintain that this interesting exercise of throwing stones, either cobblestones or pebbles, is perfectly justifiable when indulged in by persons, male or female, who do not themselves live in glass houses. Once assure ourselves that we have no glass in our windows, and then let us sally forth to shatter, with a well-directed missile, a neighbor's poor pre-

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tence of prosperity, a friend's pitiful pride in her oldest boy (who is behaving like the very deuce at college); let us (being sure we have no such substance in our houses) send a skipping pebble to call attention to A.'s horrible vulgarity in quarrelling with her servants; to B.'s disagreeably loud voice; to C.'s uncleaned brass door-knob.

"For my part, I don't think a woman has any business to pretend to be a house-keeper and not keep her brasses clean! If she is too poor to have proper service, why, then, let her be honest and put on a knob which doesn't need cleaning; but Mrs. C. always tries to put her best foot forward," the clever thrower of stones says, sending her pebble *skipping* out over public opinion; and if she listens, she will hear the faint tinkle of broken glass. This lady has usually several small pebbles of this nature. She says, smiling good-naturedly, that the Rev.

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Mr. Smith's interest in foreign missions is really beautiful, but—but it does not put any strain on his own pocket-book! She comments carelessly on Mrs. Jones's complexion; it is charming, she says, so girlish; but don't go too near it. She declares, warmly, that Mr. Robinson is such a dear, good man, and he deserves so much credit, "because, you know, his father—" And some one says, eagerly, "Why, what about his father?" "What! don't you know? my dear, he—" And then the buried father's buried sin is dug up and paraded before gaping eyes. Poor, good Mr. Robinson! how hard he has tried to forget that decently interred Past, for which he was in no sense responsible; but this skilful stone-thrower, taking a gravestone for a target, is sure to hit the mark. And yet, how simple was her remark—indeed, how friendly; "such a good man!"—what can you say better than that about anybody? She

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threw no cruel, bruising cobblestone. Apparently all her pebbles are harmless; sometimes they are marked by a pretty wit; frequently they shine with a faint phosphorescence of truth. She uses them when she goes out to luncheon, or at a tea, or as she is coming away from church. In fact, one can use such pebbles anywhere, they are so small and convenient and ready to hand. And, having used them, she goes home, and her husband makes the admiring remark that, when it comes to saying mean things, women do certainly beat men every time! And the woman, protesting that she was only stating facts, fails to hear the tinkle of broken glass from her own skylight—for people are talking about *her*!

“My dear, did you *ever* see such hats? And she’s fifty, if she’s a day. Why don’t people know how to grow old more gracefully!”

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“She is terribly mean to her servants; I hear that she only takes two quarts of milk, and uses every bit of it up-stairs. She gives her girls condensed milk! And she snoops round after they’ve gone to bed, and looks into the refrigerator to count the cold potatoes.”

“My dear, for all she makes such a splurge with that sealskin coat of hers, I saw, with my own eyes, a great hole in the side of her shoe! I do despise finery that just covers up poverty.”

Well, well—this is very squalid; but we know it is true, this sort of contemptible gossip; we know it so well that we need not illustrate it further:

I talk,
Thou talkest,
He talks.

We talk,
You talk,
They talk.

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And all the while glass comes crashing about our ears—for the honest truth is that everybody lives in a glass house. . . . “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone”; and the eager crowd of respectable accusers, burning with shocked and smirking curiosity, their hands full of stones, their fingers tingling to throw them, fell suddenly silent. One by one they slunk away, and the poor creature, crouching on the ground, her hot, miserable face hidden in her bent arm, was alone with the only One who might have stoned her.

Of course, the old proverb about not throwing stones lest our own glass houses suffer is a simple appeal to expediency—it is material common-sense, based upon the deduction that if you refrain from hitting B., B. will refrain from hitting you. As a motive for abstaining from gossip, it is, of course, better than noth-

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ing. But, to tell the truth, it is not very good. In the first place, the deduction is not quite sound. You, from a keen sense of expediency, may refrain from hitting B.; but experience proves that you cannot be certain that B., in consequence, will refrain from hitting you. You may close your lips with a snap over a witty remark in regard to A.'s inability to grow old gracefully, but you have no certainty that A. is equally reserved upon the subject of your amusing efforts to reduce your double chin. No; it is well to refrain from throwing stones on the ground of your own window-panes, but it is better to give the practice up because a quick imagination reveals the feelings of the people whose window-panes you have been so gayly and so ruthlessly shattering. Just here, however, a disquieting question arises:

“What! no conversation about people? Is the world to fall silent?”

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For, indeed, if we leave out human nature, there is comparatively little else to talk about; all the large and fundamental things of Time are rooted somehow in human souls. We cannot talk of sin or righteousness or judgment without human reference and illustration; we can hardly talk of even the trivial and unimportant without personal allusion. "My garden is not doing as well this year as last; but you should see Mrs. Smith's pansies!—they are even more discouraging than mine." That is the human reference. Furthermore, facts are facts; it *is* a pity that A. does not know how to grow old gracefully, and it is sad enough that D.'s boy is behaving so badly at college. If we are to refrain entirely from facts in relation to human nature, we might as well be dumb. Of course, it is obvious that mere refraining is as stultifying in one way as throwing stones is stultifying in another way. No;

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I shall talk,
Thou wilt talk,
He will talk.

We shall talk,
You will talk,
They will talk,

because talking is a human necessity. But if, when we talk, Imagination, just, true, and kind, stands guard at our lips, we shall not break any windows.

Imagination, in regard to the feelings of our neighbors, is the beginning of reform.

For there are very few of us who, sallying forth with our little bags of pebbles, would throw a single one of them if, by some magical process, we could know how the broken glass would hurt; if we could see the blood flow, and hear the cry of pain. That is proved by the fact that we so rarely throw our stones when the householder happens to be about; of course, fear has something to do with our

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reticence in her presence; it takes a good deal of courage to say right out to Mrs. Smith's face that we understand that her husband is making a fool of himself with a chorus girl? We might get into trouble with Mr. Smith if we were caught throwing stones at his glass house; but really, apart from fear, most of us could not bear to witness poor Mrs. Smith's pain. When she is not present, it is a different matter; we are not hampered by anything so disagreeable as the sight of her suffering. So it is quite obvious that what we need to break up the habit of stone-throwing is to cultivate a hampering consciousness of the pain it causes. We need to know just how the householder feels when she looks at her cracked window-panes or stands under some shattered skylight of hope and love.

We must have imagination.

But, unfortunately, we are not all born with this heavenly vision; in fact, we are,

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most of us, born without it, as witness the innate cruelty of children. A child pulls off a fly's legs, slowly, one by one, with keen interest and placid unconsciousness of any discomfort on the fly's part. A little later he ties a tin pan to a dog's tail, or sticks pins in a toad. Yet he is not by any means a bad boy — he is only without imagination. Little by little, however, imagination usually develops, for most of us adult human creatures do not enjoy pulling off a fly's leg. We are too conscious of the fly's objections. This consciousness, which interferes with the pleasures of childhood, is caused by the comparative ease with which, as we grow older and experience bodily pain ourselves, we can imagine unpleasant physical sensations. We do not so easily imagine unpleasant mental or spiritual sensations. So we talk, throwing our stones at our neighbors' souls as carelessly as the boy pulls off the fly's leg.

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Now, taking it for granted that we are not any more malicious than the boy, taking it for granted that we are only spiritually unimaginative, and that we would really like to cultivate a faculty which, permitting conversation in the world, would spare other people's glass houses, it is helpful to start with a certain thesis and work from that—namely, *That we all mean well.*

This assertion is the outgrowth of self-knowledge; for each of us, down deep under our poor, unsatisfactory living, each one of us knows that we do mean well, and experience has taught us that human nature is pretty much the same; we are all, under the skin of circumstance, a good deal alike. So we admit that it is an honest working hypothesis to say “we all mean well.”

Of course, it is a poor, little, cheap phrase, but what a pathetic truth it tells of all of us!—the truth of effort and of

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failure; and that is the summing - up of human nature, for without effort we should be animals, and without failure we should be gods. Effort means an ideal; and failure means achievement—to a degree. Yes; we mean well. . . . The woman who does not keep her brasses clean would undoubtedly like to see them shining, if only she could afford to employ a parlor maid. The silly person who wears a fine coat and ragged shoes has a keener feeling for what is pretty than what is necessary. Oh, of course, she is a great fool; but if you stop to think of it, it is very pathetic to be a fool? If, by imagination, the pathos of foolishness once strikes us, we shall not want to throw the witty pebble that is all ready between our fingers. An uneasy consciousness will grow in our minds that we ourselves are not always overwise. How it would cut and hurt to have somebody (as clever as ourselves) show up our silliness with an aphorism,

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or our folly in a neatly turned phrase! And it could be done. We could do it ourselves, if the folly was not our own. Just think of the things we have done and said "which make the midnight pillow burn with shame"! Just silly things, not bad. Think of the blunders in our house-keeping, which we really wanted to improve; of our well-meant, clumsy truth-telling to a friend; think of our gushing confidences (which our husbands call "slopping over"), that seemed at the moment just real friendship, but that we so deeply regret the next day; think of our petty efforts at economy, prompted by some painful anxiety that nobody knows anything about. How hard we tried! We did mean well. It was not stinginess that made us go and look into the refrigerator to see that that cold potato had not been thrown away, it was just a worried sense of responsibility; no doubt our way of doing it, "snooping

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about after the servants had gone to bed” (that was the way the stone-throwers expressed it)—no doubt our method *was* rather foolish; but we did want to do what was right. . . . Yes, Heaven send that no friend with a pocketful of pebbles be tempted by the shine and glimmer of our glass houses—for, indeed, we meant well!

Here it is—the knowledge in which imagination must take root if stone-throwing is ever to go out of fashion and the world become a pleasant place to live in—namely, that *most everybody else means well, too*.

The creed of the imaginative and kindly heart is brief:

“There is so much good in the worst of us,
There is so much bad in the best of us,
That it ill becomes any one of us
To throw stones at the rest of us.”

CONCERNING CHRISTMAS GIVING

“I’LL attend to it after the holidays.”

“Just as soon as Christmas is over, I’ll take the matter up.”

“Oh, I can’t go to any committee meetings in December! I’m so busy.”

“Calls? No, indeed! I don’t make calls at this time of year. I have too much to do.”

And what is she doing, this busy woman? She is making out long lists of names, and writing against each name a “present” of one kind or another; she is lying awake at night, jaded with a day’s shopping, and thinking who has been over-

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looked. Heavens! she forgot Mary Robinson! Mary sent a sachet-bag last Christmas, and, of course, something must be sent her this Christmas; and then the Giver-of-gifts groans and turns on her sleepless pillow, and wishes Mary and her sachet-bag in ballyhack! Is this an exaggeration? Alas! no; it may even go further; this sleepless lady, revolving her Christmas debts in her tired mind, will suddenly, with a pang of relief, bethink her of a certain little spool-box of gray linen, painted with snow-drops and tied with pink ribbon; just the thing for Mary Robinson. To be sure, last Christmas this spool-box was sent to her. It came with bravery of white paper and holly sprig and gay ribbons; there was a "Merry Christmas" card tucked into one corner, which announced that the box brought "Jane Smith's love and best wishes." The Giver-of-gifts read that card, opened the gay little package, looked at the spool-

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box; said, "Oh, how kind!—so pretty." Then, after displaying it for a moment to her family (who showed indifferent interest), she had put it on her show counter—a small table, where she stacked the loot of the Day. Christmas night she had sat down at her desk with another list—"things to be acknowledged."

"Oh, now, look here, dear," growled a friendly voice at the fireside, "do drop that nonsense, and go to bed. You are tired out."

"I can't, dear," she had sighed; "I've got to get my thanks off."

"*Thanks!*" the kindly growl went on. "Oh, you women!—you call it 'thanks,' do you? It's execrations; 'curses, not loud, but deep.'"

"Oh, Tom dear, not before the children! I'll get through in a quarter of an hour."

"Hang Christmas!" the Bear said, anxiously—for, indeed, the Giver-of-gifts did look worn out. But she wrote a very

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pretty note to Jane Smith; she said the spool-box was perfectly sweet, and Jane was perfectly dear to send it; licked a stamp onto the envelope and with a tired sigh told her Bear that she had got most of those dreadful notes written, thank Heaven! The next day the spool-box, carefully wrapped up to keep it clean, was put away (with A.'s pin-cushion, and B.'s silver pen-holder, and C.'s cut-glass mucilage bottle, etc.) on the top shelf of the spare-room closet. This was not as ungracious as it looked; the Giver-of-gifts, as it happens, never uses spool-boxes; she has already two pin-cushions for every bedroom in the house, and her little boy gave her a silver pen-holder on her last birthday. So why should not the *accumulation of the unnecessary* be put on the top shelf of the spare-room closet?

This shelf is one of the things the tired woman thinks of as she lies awake, harassed by her "debts." She must give

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something to A., because A. gave something to her; to B. and to C., for the same timid and foolish reason. Oh, if she could only give back that pin-cushion, what a relief to mind and purse! It is then that the insidious thought of C.'s mucilage bottle comes to her, just as, a little while ago, she thought of the spool-box which it was so perfectly dear in Jane Smith to give. But there is a haunting fear at the back of the tired mind: suppose she should make a mistake? Suppose, by some horrid freak of memory, she should send C.'s bottle to C.? But no; the very day after Christmas, last year, she had written the donor's names on those things on the top shelf. Perhaps this very contingency was latent in her mind at the time. Of course, there remains the ghastly chance that Jane Smith showed Mary Robinson that spool-box before she sent it—? But, no! that is too dreadful a thought. It shall go, neatly wrapped up in white pa-

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per, tied with ribbons (a little wider than last year), with a Christmas-card (slightly more expensive than the one Jane used), and Mary will receive it, and say, "Oh, how kind!—so pretty!" And write her note of thanks Christmas evening, declaring that the box is perfectly sweet, and the tired Giver perfectly dear to have thought of her.

"Thought of her!" how much *thought*, my mistresses, has been here? How much sentiment, how much love, how much sense of fitness, how much honor for and commemoration of the Supreme Gift to the world? Travesty, deceit, dishonor! She is not only "tired" because of her folly, this silly woman; she is worse than tired; she is belittled in her own eyes, she is coarsened in her instincts, she is blunted in her spiritual perceptions. Whereas this year she may wince in doing up that spool-box, next year she will make a joke of it.

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No one can do dishonor to the Ideal and remain unspotted.

Can we, any of us, who have secretly used Jane's spool-box to pay our debts to Mary, deny this? Unless the Giver-of-gifts is willing that Jane should know how her gift has been used, and that Mary should be aware of the history of the pretty box that comes to her bearing "love and best wishes," unless the Christmas debtor is willing to have everything open and above-board, she must admit her shame, and realize that her fatigued deceit has left a spot upon her soul. Of course, if she is able to say to Mary Robinson, "This spool-box was given to me; but I don't care to use it myself, so I am sending it to you, with Christmas greetings," or something to that effect, all is well. Mary may not be particularly flattered, but the Ideal of Christmas giving is not degraded, and the Christmas atmosphere is just so much clearer and

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purser, just so much more worthy of the Divine Gift which the poor, dishonored Day is meant to mark. But how many of us would be willing to say this? How secret we are about that spare-room closet!

And secrecy is confession.

When we look seriously at the flippant degradation of Christmas, which has suddenly become so marked, and at the spiritual decadence which accompanies it, we shall probably, most of us, say that it is time to call a halt. This miserable and foolish business of *giving because we have received*, encouraged as it is by shopkeepers, fed by our own mean ambition and vanity, nourished by a paltry unwillingness to "be under obligations," and by the mere fashion of the period which decrees Christmas excesses — this silly and fatiguing custom has got to stop — and women are the folk to stop it! Here is a reform fresh to our hands. Here is

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a work waiting for us. It needs common-sense, not legislation; it needs reverent souls, not political power. And the time is ripe for it now.

“What! no Christmas?” some one says, shocked and disapproving. On the contrary, the very fullest and most beautiful Christmas.

“But no presents?”

Presents? Of course there must be presents. The world cannot lose the deep excitement of childhood during all the busy, happy weeks before the 25th of December; it cannot lose the delight of surprised love, the pleasant warmth of the heart to find that friendship remembers. We cannot give these things up. They are dear and sacred in themselves; dearer and more sacred when they are gathered up in reverent hearts, and held, as one holds a jewel in the sunshine, to catch the light that streams from a Baby cradled “between two beasties,” in a

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thatched stable near the Inn. No; they were Wise Men, it will be remembered, who bore gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh:

“ Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,
Three caskets of gold, with golden keys;
Their robes were of crimson silk, with rows
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.”

Thus, out of the East, that first Christmas, *bearing gifts*, rode the Wise Men. Let us, too, bear gifts, but let us be wise! Let us array ourselves against the cheap and tawdry desecration of the Day—but not against the crimson robes, and the rows of bells and pomegranates and furbelows, the caskets and the perfumes, and all the signs and symbols of peace and good-will.

Perhaps the first step towards wisdom will be to fill ourselves with the spirit of Christmas, the deep purpose of service and good-will and peace. This is, how-

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ever, the intimate affair of each soul, and does not admit of rule or precept; it is the subjective side of Christmas. It is the objective side that calls so loudly for reform—calls more loudly each year, for certainly things are getting rapidly worse. Twenty-five years ago, Christmas was not the burden that it is now; there was less haggling and weighing, less *quid pro quo*, less fatigue of body, less weariness of soul; and, most of all, there was less loading up with trash. The statement of a certain shopkeeper in this connection may be taken as typical of the whole situation.

“Why,” inquired a customer, “do you have these dreadful things for sale?”

The shopkeeper laughed. “Yes, they are dreadful,” he admitted. And, indeed, they were—gift-books bound in plush, with “hand-painted” landscapes enclosed in gilt filigree, fastened, somehow, to the covers. They were, in every detail, a tri-

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umph of bad taste. And they were all ticketed \$10. "Of course they are dreadful," this intelligent man said, "but what can I do? People want something that shows money. You don't know how many people come in at Christmas-time and say: 'I want to buy a present for ten dollars—I don't care what.' Then the clerk shows this gift-book, and they pay their ten dollars and walk out. Half of 'em don't even look inside; it's the ten dollars' worth of cover they want."

Now could there be anything more melancholy than such Christmas giving?—unless, indeed, it is the melancholy of the bargain-counters of department stores just before Christmas, or the melancholy of the out-of-town cars, crowded with weary women lugging home presents that they feel obliged to give to persons who do not wish to receive them. And each year more such presents are being given, more "debts" are being incurred, more

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spare-room closets are used as clearing-houses. We want to realize this in all its force before we draw up our declaration of Reform, the first paragraph of which is that we pledge ourselves to the honor and glory of Christmas!

The next may be the assertion of our purpose to express the spirit of Christmas by gifts which shall signify one of three things (or, perhaps, all of them):

Love;
Friendship;
Human kindness.

Such gifts do not imply money; they do not necessitate fatigue; they have nothing to do with debtors and creditors; and they never know the secrecy which is shame.

The moment we put our Christmas giving on this basis, we draw the first breath of freedom; *for we shall not give a single present we don't want to give.* Think of

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that — giving only what our hearts prompt us to give! Why, it cuts that long list in half, right away. There is no lying awake at night to think how on earth we are going to repay Mary Robinson; for if she loved us when she sent that spool-box, we are not her debtors. We owe nothing but love to one another. And if she did not love us, so much the worse for Mary! and it is the merest kindness to refrain from “paying back,” so that another Christmas she may be free, too.

Of course, this plan of action will not abolish spool-boxes; it will only make them appropriate; it will bestow them where they belong—for some there be who like spool-boxes. And it will not abolish the thought and planning—only it will be pleasant thought, not anxious and harassed and perhaps (such things have been known!) bad-tempered thought. In our Reform we will have to think, and think

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hard. The giving of gifts, even in the right spirit, is a difficult business, for who can tell what other people want? How many sighs are breathed on Christmas morning:

“Oh, dear, I did want a ring, but I hate opals!”

“Well, there, I’m sure it was very kind in William—but I should so much rather have had a really handsome card-case than this purse. Not but that it’s very nice, only—” and then a sigh.

“Yes, I did want books. But—well, I hate poetry. Still, this is very interesting, of course—” and so on.

Smothered or audible sighs, as the breeding of the recipient may suggest; but sighs, all the same.

Let us say that in giving the opals and the purse there was, on the part of the giver, no violation of the spirit of Christmas. It was only the chance of war, so to speak—you may hit or you may miss;

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but the results were none the less unsatisfactory all round, for we all want to hit. So, of course, the thinking and planning must go on, even when we have reformed; but we will swear to ourselves that it shall be done with peace, or not done at all. "*I am making a linen centrepiece for you,*" wrote one who was in the spirit on the Lord's Day, "*but it will not be finished by the 25th, because I have been so much occupied that I could not get time for embroidery—and I would not put in a single stitch that was hurried or worried. I want it to carry to you nothing but pleasantness and peace.*"

No; we reformers will think and plan, joyfully, and endeavor not to give poetry to the prosaic, nor opals to the superstitious. But as it is so hard, even for divining love, to be sure on these matters, we might take one further step in our Reform: where any uncertainty exists, let us give as a token of love, or friendship, or

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human kindness, something that, while expressing these things, will, at least, be harmless. Let it be something that does not last; that brings the meaning and vanishes! Something that never will know the indignity of the top shelf of a spare-room closet.

A knock at a friend's door on Christmas morning, and the clasp of a hand, brings the meaning of the day. A growing plant bears it. Yes, the loaf of bread, the jug of wine, but, most of all, thou beside me, singing in the wilderness!—the personal revelation carries this sacred meaning.

Suppose a note came on Christmas Day, saying, not, "I send my love and best wishes with this spool-box," but, "*I want you to know that your patience, or courage, or tenderness, during this last year, will help me to live more bravely and courageously and lovingly this year.*" What a Christmas present the receipt of such a letter

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would be to any one of us! what a gift for any one of us to send to the human heart that has given us courage for the burden and heat of the day! Compare it with the contents of the spare-room closet.

To be sure, such a message of the soul cannot often be sent, for the people whose courage helps us to live are not too plenty. But there are many plain folk, folk like ourselves, who certainly mean well, even if they are not inspiring; folk to whom we want to say "Merry Christmas!"—and to put into their hands some sign of our words. To these people, if we do not know clearly what they want, let us give the evanescent and vanishing symbol of the meaning of Christmas and of the peace and good-will that we wish them.

Thus shall Christmas be lifted from the dust of trivialities into which we have flung it.

And thus shall we be lifted to the level of Christmas!

TO THE GIRL WHO WRITES

THIS girl is rather more frequent than she used to be. At least, she is more obvious, because, whereas she used to write her poems or essays or stories only for her own eyes, or for those of her dearest friend, she writes them now with the not unreasonable expectation that they shall be for everybody's eyes. Such expectation is so encouraging that the number of Girls who Write has greatly increased.

The hope of publication has brought a new element into such writing, which is both helpful and dangerous. Helpful, because it makes the Girl who Writes

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more careful in her work; she gives more thought to the mere mechanical detail of it; she writes clearly—with a typewriter, if possible—and on only one side of the paper. She leaves broad margins. She does not roll her MS., but sends it flat, in a large envelope. All these things, she has been told, propitiate the tiger-hearted editor. But possible publicity does more than this: it suggests great care in the use of English. The Girl who Writes realizes that grammar is important; that she must not end a sentence with a preposition; that certain inelegancies are to be avoided. She will not say “in our midst”; she rejects “and which”; she even struggles bravely with personal pronouns, and is careful not to follow “one” by “they” or “their.” If she is a Pennsylvanian she even tries to discriminate between “shall” and “will” (but in this she is rarely successful).

These things have been taught by the

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hope of publication, and that they are good things to know there can be no possible doubt. Yet they are but the outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual grace which is called literature; and, compared with the dangers accompanying them, they are small matters.

The first danger of the hope of publication is the comparative ease with which, nowadays, everything which has been written can be printed.

In the last fifteen years thousands of periodicals and papers have sprung up, which means hundreds of open doors to any one who, with a moderate amount of cleverness, chooses to put pen to paper. The ease with which any of us may appear in print has been fatal to more than one good, honest talent which, with some wholesome discouragement, might have done valuable work in the world. Of course, getting one's stories printed does not of necessity imply anything so

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mercenary as a check. At first its absence may not strike the contributor of a story which has been accepted, let us say, by the *Humming Bird*, or the *Purple Cat*, or even the village newspaper. At the moment when one tears off the wrapper and sees one's own thoughts set down in cold type on a page that is going to be read by thousands of eyes—what difference does a check make? Probably any one who has done any literary work will agree that there is no moment of creative joy so passionate as the moment when one sees one's self first in print.

No wonder the Girl who Writes thrills with the hope or the recollection of it, and is content to let such things as checks bide their time. In her appreciation of this intense moment she has been known to offer to pay for the printing of her sketch in a periodical, or for its publication in book form. The latter she can

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do easily enough; there are plenty of publishers who are willing to take her money and print her book, exactly as they would print the report of an insane asylum or a hotel prospectus. When the Girl who Writes has had her MS. declined with thanks by a dozen of the great publishing-houses, she has been known to say that there was a *clique* in literature which would not let the new-comer in. It is at this hurt and angry moment, perhaps, that she goes to a publisher, and, turning her purse inside out, thrusts upon the world her little, pathetic, white-hot, undesired book. It is here that the fatal ease of publication gets in its deadly work: it makes the Girl who Writes blind to a certain hard, economic fact: *that what the world wants in literature, the world will pay for*. And what it will not pay for is not only not wanted, but (frequently) not worth having.

If, with a sinking heart, the Girl who

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Writes takes back from the postman, again and again and again, her poor, battered, mail-worn MS., let her make up her mind to this plain and sobering truth—*it is not desired*. And let her, with a delicacy which, under like circumstances, she would show for herself, refrain from sending her book where it is not wanted.

In other words, if one business house after another sees no demand for her book, let her conclude that there is no demand; and never, never, never make the mistake of publishing it herself! (This does not, of course, apply to scientific or philosophical books; these must often be practically given to the world; and then publication by the authors merits only gratitude and honor.)

The ease with which one's thoughts may be sent out into the world creates another danger—haste in writing. This danger is not peculiar to the new-comer

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in literature; it attacks the old-stager just as virulently—perhaps even more so, for the check is sometimes a bitter consideration, and the demoralizing and corrupting pot-boiler is the result. The Girl who Writes generally does not have this temptation; what her work may bring is, in nine case out of ten, secondary to the work itself.

It is only when easy publication has brought, after a while, a very little bit of money, that money as an end becomes a possible consideration. But the temptation to haste is another matter. To write, to appear in print, to be famous! All this is happiness enough; so on she goes! What hot and flashing sentences tear across her illegible pages! what splendid adjectives, what fine language, what burning suggestions! Then, "Fini" written with a beautiful flourish, the wet sheets are thrust into an envelope, and out runs the Girl who Writes to

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drop the package into the mail-box!
Then come palpitating days and wake-
ful nights of expectation. Then comes
—but, as the picture in *Bab Ballads* de-
clares, “*the rest is too awful!*”

The return of that package need not
be rehearsed. The Girl knows it. It is
to be hoped that she knows also the re-
vulsion of feeling that comes in reading
over again, in cold blood, those words
that seemed so full of genius when the
MS., hot from the pen, started out into
the world. The only really hopeless con-
dition in literature is where the writer
cannot see the weakness, or cheapness,
or bad grammar, or inadequacy of work
which in the moment of creation seemed
good and strong. If the Girl who Writes
cannot see the faults in her work, there
is no hope for her. Every publisher has
met real talent which, hampered by this
fatal and pathetic blindness, never “ar-
rives,” as the saying is. Over and over

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again the honest and earnest effort is made; over and over again one friendly critic or another essays the ungracious task of pointing out what it is in the work which makes it just fail of success; but the writer cannot see.

Blindness like this is tragic, and is probably congenital and hopeless; but there is a blindness that comes only from haste in writing, which, when there is an open mind and real artistic perception, can be cured or, at any rate, alleviated. There can be little doubt that if, when "Finis" is written, the paper or poem or story were consigned, not to the mailbox, but to a pigeon-hole for a month or six weeks, then taken out and read carefully, coldly, if possible, certainly critically, many a change for the better would be made. Of course, this sort of drudgery seems very stupid after the fine fury of composition. "Let genius burn, and hang grammar," says the poet (the young

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poet). "Genius is aspiration," such an one declared once; but a listener, full of years and honors, said, dryly, "Genius is perspiration."

There is one other thing that the Girl who Writes ought to consider, and that is this: has life been real enough, rich enough, deep enough, for her, in her fifteen or sixteen or even twenty years, to have found in it something to give the world? Experience, after all, is what counts. And, generally speaking, if the Girl who Writes has lived the safe and guarded and normal life which she ought to have lived, she has had no experiences; she has not gone down very deep into life. Her hopes and fears and joys have been all on the surface—where they should be.

There is still another danger about early expression—*the stream gives out*. Why this should be may be explained in one way or another, but the fact is perfectly

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certain. Any editor can tell dreary tales of precocious talent, even of genius (which is a different thing altogether), which has burned like a comet across his murky editorial horizon—flashed, and burned, and dropped into darkness. This poor editor finds a story written by a girl, say, of eighteen—delicate, discriminating, with real distinction of style, with positive human interest; a story that makes the battered reader thrill with hope that he has found a valuable contributor; it is published, and further contributions are solicited. But, oh, what weakness and insipidity those “further contributions” reveal! The torch has been blown out, the fountain has failed. Why? Who can say! But it would seem as though there had not been oil enough in the lamp, water enough in the cistern. Life had not yet given love and hope and death; the writer had not yet really begun to live.

TO THE GIRL WHO WRITES

Of course, this is a generalization. It is not always so; but it happens often enough to at least suggest reflection—which might be summarized as follows:

Be sure you have something to give before you offer your thoughts to the world.

The critical friend of the Girl who Writes will feel a certain uneasiness at any publication before the writer is twenty-two or twenty-three. The Girl who Writes will think one might well suggest Methuselah as an age qualification if twenty-five or twenty-six years were suggested; so the critical friend had best forbear—but he will have his opinion!

For, after all, while one muses the fire burns! Judgment and deep understanding of life, love, and patience, reverence and hope, come with years, and we want these things in the books we read, because the knowledge of them helps us to

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live. And if our girl, while she is waiting for such knowledge, takes the time of growth to feed upon the classics, she will cultivate taste and style and the sense of proportion, so that when she does get to work she will make us all her debtors.

The sum of all these discouraging and disagreeable things said to a girl that everybody is really very fond of (never end a sentence with a preposition, girls!) is: wait; and again, wait; and yet once more, wait.

Wait until you can publish what you have to say under dignified auspices.

Wait until the glamour of creation settles and clears and you can judge of the quality of your work.

Wait until living has taught you what life means; until, through study, you have begun to comprehend art and nature, and, through experience, you have begun to apprehend God and man.

TO THE GIRL WHO WRITES

Then write!—and may the world be better and richer and happier because God gives you the high and noble power of expression.

THE END

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